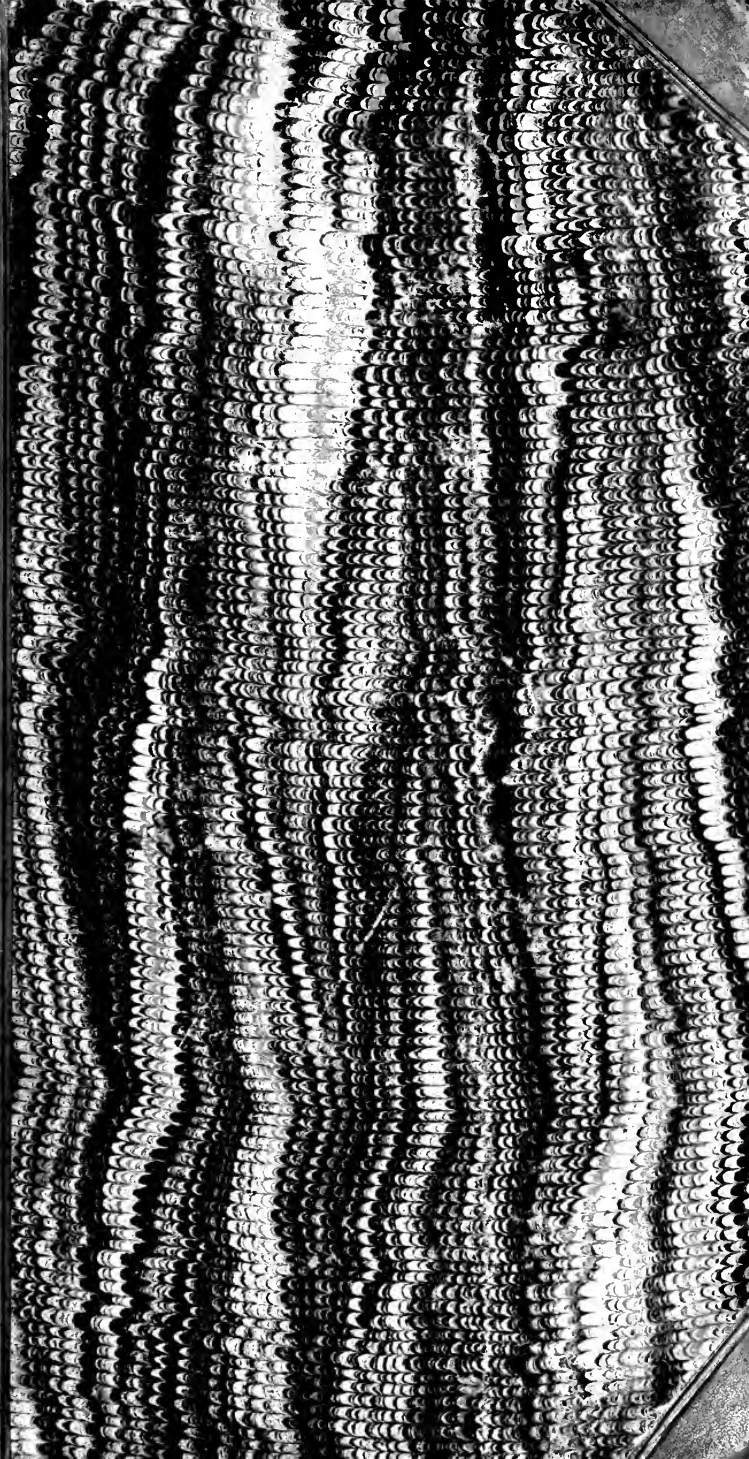


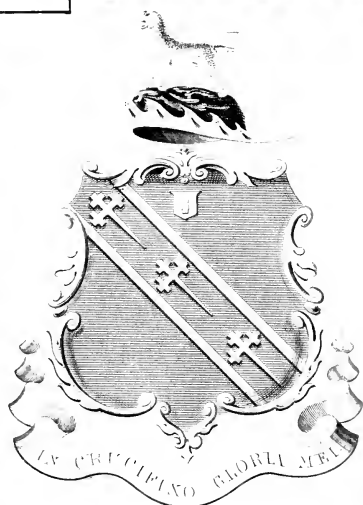
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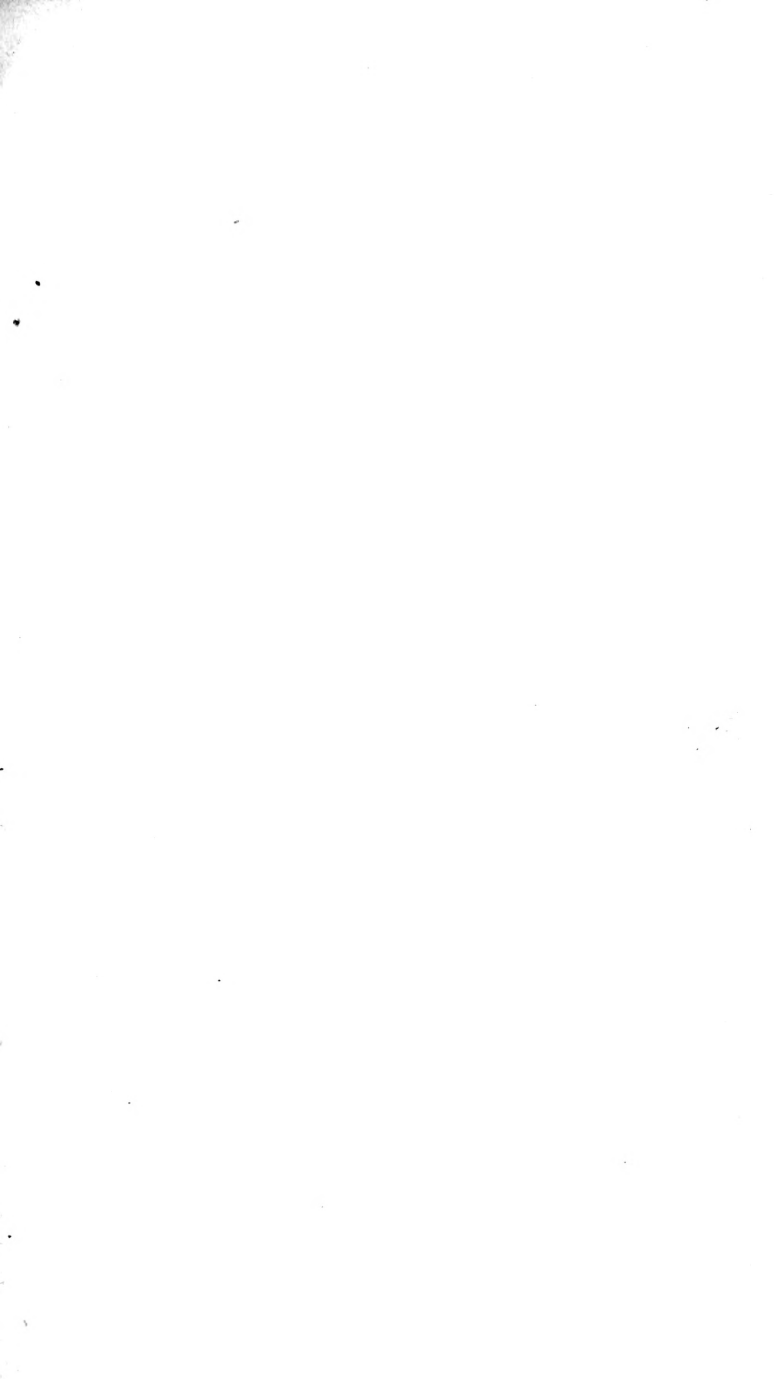
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THE
S T O R Y
OF
L I L L Y D A W S O N.

BY
MRS. CROWE,

AUTHOR OF
“THE ADVENTURES OF SUSAN HOPLEY,” ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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U. I

LILLY DAWSON.

CHAPTER I.

WHICH CONTAINS SOME ACCOUNT OF THE INN CALLED
THE BLACK HUNTSMAN, AND ITS OCCUPANTS.

Not far from the coast, in a remote and somewhat unfrequented part of one of the south-eastern counties of England, dwelt, at the commencement of the present century, a family of the name of Littenhaus. They were said to be of foreign origin ; and this persuasion, which took its rise from their un-English patronymic, was confirmed by the circumstance that their house was much frequented by visitors from the other side of the channel. Of themselves they gave no account. They

had arrived there as perfect strangers from some distant part of the country, apparently in consequence of an advertisement which had been inserted in the newspapers, intimating that the inn, commonly known by the style and title of "The Black Huntsman," was for sale.

Shortly after the appearance of this notice, two young men had come to view the place; and, presently after their departure, the agent of Sir Lawrence Longford, to whom the property belonged, received a letter, purporting that Jacob Littenhaus was willing to become the purchaser. The bargain was struck and the money paid;—the sum indeed was not by any means large, for it was a house of little business; and in that respect was not considered likely to improve. In fact, none of its previous occupants had succeeded in making a living out of it; and every one wondered that a new tenant should be willing to undertake the hopeless struggle.

“ But he does not know whose shoes he is stepping into,” said the jolly host of the Red Lion at the neighbouring village of Combe Martin to the agent, Mr. Cobb; “ they couldn’t keep none of his predecessors above water. I wonder Sir Lawrence doesn’t turn the place into some’ut else ; it’s no sitiation for an inn.”

“ I don’t know what else it’s fit for,” replied the agent ; “ there’s nothing to be made of the land, you know. It will grow nothing but heath and furze, and the house is a capital house ; large and roomy — just fit for an inn.”

“ Why, it was built for one, I suppose,” replied Lacy. “ But that was in old times, when it had a trade.”

“ Yes,” replied Mr. Cobb, “ the turning away of the road, and the new pier and harbour at F., have settled its business. There’ll never be anything done there again, I’m afraid. However, Sir Lawrence has got it

off his hands now ; and they that have taken it must make the best of it."

And this, when the Littenhaus family arrived, they seemed well inclined to do. They made no complaints of want of trade, though it was certainly but little they had ; and, though the people in the village were always foretelling that they would never be able to keep the house open, yet, somehow or other, they did contrive to do that which their predecessors had failed to effect. One thing was, as our host of the Red Lion was wont to say, they had no rent to pay, as all the previous occupants had. The house was their own, so that all they had to earn was their daily bread. If they could get that, they might make a shift to live ; and it appeared that they did get it.

The family, on their arrival, consisted of the father, an elderly and very infirm man ; two sons ; two daughters ; and a little girl called Lilly Dawson, said to be the child of

a younger sister of old Littenhaus; but, her parents being dead, she had become a dependant on the bounty of her uncle and cousins for her subsistence.

Of the two sons, the elder, whose name was Ambrose, was a middle-sized, strongly-built youth, with dark hair and eyes, and tolerable features; whilst the younger, called Luke, was short and thick-set, with square shoulders, light eyes and hair, and a broad, pale face.

With respect to the daughters, they were rather handsome young women, but their beauty was not of a very pleasing character: neither were their manners nor those of the brothers attractive; and their mode of life at the Black Huntsman was certainly not calculated to improve them, for it was very solitary. They were too far from the village for any constant communion with its inhabitants, even had they desired to maintain it, which apparently they did not. The sons, who were the

only members of the family frequently seen, had a very anti-social air ; and the daughters were rarely visible, except on Sundays, when they invariably appeared at church in considerable splendour. Nay, so unfailing were they in their devotions, that, though it rained “cats and dogs,” as the worthy Mrs. Lacy of the Red Lion said, you were still sure to see Anna and Charlotte Littenhaus in their pew. On these occasions, they were wont to arrive in a covered vehicle something like the machine used for transporting pianofortes through the streets. They called it the shander-a-dan ; but, as it was painted black, and was drawn by a stout horse of the same hue, it was known in the neighbourhood by the name of the *Littenhaus Hearse*.

The old man, Jacob Littenhaus, the father, had a much more pleasing countenance, and a more open and accessible air than the rest of the family ; but he was seldom seen, his infirmities keeping him a prisoner to the house

or its immediate vicinity; and if any one happened to suggest that he might come to church in the shander-a-dan, they were answered that, the vehicle not being on springs, he could not bear the motion of it.

Thus, beyond the fact of his existence, nobody knew much of old Jacob Littenhaus, nor were they much better acquainted with young Lilly Dawson. She was said to be an extremely stupid little girl; and those who chanced to see her declared that her countenance confirmed the report. Still, her features were regular; and, had they been illuminated by cheerfulness and intelligence, she might have been a pretty child; as it was, with her stolid look and squalid attire, she was a very unattractive object. Young as she was, she was made to do a great portion of the house-work, her cousins Anna and Charlotte being her only assistants, with the exception of the odd jobs done by Short Bill, the lad who drove the shander-a-dan, took

care of the black horse, carried coals, did the errands, and whatever else was required of him.

He was called Short Bill from his peculiarly stunted growth, which appeared to have suddenly stopped when he was about twelve years old, bequeathing him the stature of a child, with the form and features of a man. He was not exactly like a dwarf either, but looked more like an old boy; for, though he was in fact young, he had a shrivelled face—such a one as is sometimes seen belonging to a postboy on a well-travelled road—or, at least, used to be seen, when postboys lived and flourished; the cheeks rosy, but the skin pursing up into wrinkles, like a prematurely withered apple. Whether he had ever had a father and mother seems uncertain; there appeared no reason to suppose he had; nor was he ever known to lay claim to any patronymic, style, or title, than that of Short Bill; and, had he been able to write, such would undoubtedly have been his signature.

At the time the Littenhaus family arrived, Short Bill had been acting as supernumerary ostler at the Red Lion, where Ambrose chanced to see him, and, for some merit or other, not apparent to the world in general, was so far taken with his appearance, that he immediately secured his services for the Black Huntsman, where the mode of life, which would have been insufferable to most people, seemed to suit him well enough. Being the only domestic on the premises, he had no companion: and, as he was not permitted to absent himself, except when sent on an errand, he had no opportunity of seeking any; but his natural taciturnity very much mitigated the hardship of this enforced solitude and silence. He was on very friendly terms with the black horse; and, as his duties were regular, and not extremely arduous, he spent a good deal of his time asleep in the stable; a mode of disposing of it, to which his employers made no objection, provided he was

always to be found when they needed his services — and this he took care to be ; Short Bill being one of those persons who are never out of the way. On the whole, he seemed very contented ; and, since happiness in this life is only comparative, if he opened his eyes and looked about him, he might certainly have found great reason for self-gratulation ; for he was assuredly, by many degrees, the happiest member of the family to which he was attached.

Old Jacob, the father, was not only infirm, but he was evidently a broken-down, broken-hearted man ; alone, in the midst of his family ; far away from his friends, if he ever had any ; and gradually sinking into the grave. His sons had none of the hilarity of youth. They frequently, one or other of them, went from home, and they attended the neighbouring fairs and markets ; but they sought few amusements, joined in no sports, formed no intimacies, and never invited any

body to visit them. Then the life led by the daughters was inexpressibly dull; the weekly opportunity of exhibiting their fine clothes to the villagers which the recurring Sundays afforded them, appearing to be their only pleasure; except that they, now and then, made a journey in the shander-a-dan to Hotham, a town about seven miles distant, where dwelt an expert dressmaker of the name of Grosset; the mantuamaker of the village not being dexterous enough for their purpose.

As for Lilly Dawson, her situation was, if possible, still less enviable. Though not more than eight years old when she was brought to the Black Huntsman, she was every body's servant, and maid-of-all-work in the most emphatic sense of the term. Certainly, Anna and Charlotte Littenhaus did condescend to some of the least onerous duties, such as dusting, making beds, and so forth; but all the dirty work fell to the share of Lilly, who,

great part of her time, was little better than a Cinderella. Not that there was actually much to do; for the arrival of a guest at the Black Huntsman was by no means an event of daily occurrence; but, being unequal to her task, it was never done; and poor Lilly was always toiling after it in vain. Then she had the entire charge of waiting on the old man; but this was the most agreeable part of her duties, for he was kind to her, and she had attached herself to him, the more, perhaps, that she had nothing else to attach herself to. And even this was an instinctive, unreasoning kind of attachment, like that of a dog for its master; for her mind was subdued to the quality of her condition, and her spirit broken by hardship; so that she went through her tasks like an automaton, exhibiting only so much intelligence in adapting her means to her ends, as we often see exercised by the lower animals.

Still, there was one morning in the week

in which a gleam of satisfaction might be discerned on Lilly's countenance, and that was Sunday, especially if the day were fine; for then Ambrose and Luke generally went away in their boat, and did not return till night; whilst, the young ladies being at church, she was left alone with Uncle Littenhaus. This was the only opportunity she had, too, of cultivating her single accomplishment—namely, reading. On other days, when her house-work was—we will not say done, for that it never was—but when it was at a standstill—she had her cousin's stockings to darn, or the house-linen to mend, till she lay down outwearied, and already half asleep, upon her bed. But on Sundays, from ten o'clock, when the shander-a-dan drove from the door, till six in the evening, when the young women returned from church, her time was her own and her uncle's. A good part of this peaceful period she generally passed in sleep, making up for her short hours on the other

six nights of the week ; but Jacob Littenhaus, whose ill health warned him that he was daily drawing nearer to his end, had begun to have some twinges of affright at the prospect before him. He had always been a thoughtless, weak man, and quite ignorant of religion—he had never been taught any, never had any—and he had done many things that were very wrong in his time, more from want of reflection and want of knowledge than actual depravity ; but some circumstances had happened of late, that had startled his mind awake ; and when he saw himself but little past the prime of life, descending to the grave, he recollected that there was a book called the Bible, that he had heard much talk about ; and he felt some curiosity to know what it was, and whether it would afford him any consolation. So he desired Short Bill, when he went to the village, to buy him one, but by no means to let his sons or daughters see it. Bill executed the commission, but

so injudiciously, that the book was a dead letter to Jacob from the smallness of the print ; and the only time he could derive any benefit from his acquisition, was when he could get Lilly to read to him.

Poor Lilly—who was quite as unenlightened as her uncle, read very badly, and was obliged to spell all the hard words—began at the head of the title-page, passing thence to “ the Most High and Mighty Prince James, by the grace of God,” and so on, to the first chapter of Genesis, till, little by little, they crept on through the Pentateuch. But the Hebrew names were a terrible stumblingblock in the way of the neophytes ; and thus, as may be easily conceived, Jacob found less comfort than he had expected from this far-famed volume ; whilst the only idea Lilly had on the subject was, that if the heroes and heroines of the tale had had less crabbed appellations, she might have felt more interest in their fortunes. As the matter stood, however, the

only benefit derived from these prelections was, that they preserved her from the misfortune of forgetting the little reading she knew.

As time advanced, Lilly's duties became more arduous, for Jacob required more and more of her assistance; and, whatever else she had to do, she never neglected him; although she frequently got into trouble on account of the arrears of her other work, consequent on his increasing necessities. It was not age that rendered him so feeble; he was, in fact, not more than fifty-five; but his infirmities had been occasioned by personal injuries received before the Littenhaus family was known in the part of the country they now inhabited.

It was this premature decline—for he had previously been a hale, hearty man—that had somewhat improved Jacob's character and awakened his reflections. Had he retained his health till age overtook him, he would

probably never have thought of such matters as now occasionally occupied his mind. It is sickness and sorrow that bring repentance—not old age. As it was, he yearned for that comfort which nobody was at hand to give him, and which he knew not where to seek; and, as he grew daily more and more sorrowful, he clung daily more and more to Lilly, who was his only friend; for there was no cordiality betwixt him and his children; and it was too evident that they cared nothing about him. When they spoke of him at all, it was as a burthen; and, instead of taking his place as the head of the house, he was treated as an unwelcome dependant. It would be too much to say, that this gave Lilly pain—life was to her a wholly mechanical thing; and her mind and feelings were too obtuse and unawakened to be conscious of compassion. But she was good-natured; and therefore, instinctively, the more he needed her, the more she was drawn towards him.

In this manner, the family had resided about eighteen months at the Black Huntsman, doing so little business, that it seemed difficult to believe they made a living out of it; when, one night, a man arrived, wearing a sailor's dress, who was received as a welcome guest and old acquaintance. They called him Hans Peffer; and, although he spoke English pretty fluently, it was with a foreign accent. He was moreover a rough, coarse-mannered, and sinister-looking person; and, had there been any spectator of his reception capable of observation, he might well have wondered how such an unattractive visitor should have aroused so much animation and excitement in his hosts. However, they seemed to have many old friends and recollections in common; and the inquiries on the part of the Littenhaus family were numerous. Even Jacob appeared to forget his aches and pains, whilst he listened to tidings of his former companions.

“ But why didn’t you come before ?” asked Ambrose.

“ Because I never got your letter till about three months since.”

“ What, did you never go to the old shop after we left ?” inquired Luke.

“ No,” answered Hans ; “ we didn’t know exactly what had happened, and thought it best to keep off.”

“ Why, what did you hear ?” asked Charlotte.

“ That you’d sheered off, because the place was too hot to hold you ; and it was thought, if you’d stayed a week longer, worse would have come of it — so I thought we’d best give them a wide berth and keep away.”

“ But how came you to find the letter at last then ?”

“ I didn’t find it ; Locksley found it and brought it to me. But how are you getting on ? Have you been doing any business here ?”

“Very little,” answered Ambrose. “Nobody has found us out but Locksley, and he’s devilish cautious, you know.”

“So much the better,” said Jacob, shaking his head.

“And is there nothing doing in this neighbourhood?” asked Hans.

“Nothing,” replied the other. “They’re the most primitive people you ever saw. If you talked to them about running a cask, they wouldn’t know what you meant.”

“So much the better for them,” again murmured Jacob, in an undertone, whilst his daughters cast a reproving glance at him.

“So much the better for *us*,” echoed Hans. “Why, Jacob, what’s come along o’ you?”

“Oh! never mind him!” said Charlotte; “but tell us what you’ve got? Have you any silks?”

No,” answered Hans; “how could I venture till I’d seen the coast? I couldn’t tell

where to stow them away, and they might have got damaged."

"You might have brought them up here," suggested Anna.

"How could I tell that? Besides, it's a devilish long way from the shore, let me tell you!"

"Only three quarters of a mile," answered Charlotte.

"But that's a devilish long way! You may fall foul of a dozen folks in three quarters of a mile."

"They wouldn't suspect anything if you did," said Anna. "There has never been any business done here; and they know nothing about it."

"But they might learn," objected Hans.

"It is a difficulty," said Ambrose. "The beach is perfectly flat, and there's no great surf—capital for running in a boat—but there isn't a rock within two miles, nor even a hole big enough to stow a cask away."

“Who does that mill belong to?” asked Hans.

“Ah!” said Luke, “that’s the place, if we could get it—close to the beach; and the path up to it in a gully, where nobody ever passes.”

“But who does it belong to?” repeated Hans.

“A man called Ryland,” returned Ambrose.

“Is it his own?” inquired Hans.

“Yes,” answered Charlotte; “he spent all his money in building it, because there was no mill near at hand; and he thought he was sure to do well in it—and so he has.”

“There’s no buying him out then?” said Hans.

“Buy him out!—no,” replied Ambrose; “where’s the money to come from? Besides, he has got a boy that he is bringing up to the same trade.”

“It’s a pity!” said Hans. “I never saw a

better place, nor more convenient, in *my* life."

"I wish we had it!" said Anna; "for, besides that, old Ryland's a regular nuisance, so near."

"What, does he molest you?" asked Hans.

"No, but he might," replied Anna; "and then that sprig of a boy of his is always prowling about the moor of an evening."

Shortly after this visit of Hans, who spent a couple of days with his friends, and then walked away as he came, two other men of the same description presented themselves, and from that time the society at the Black Huntsman was not quite in so stagnant a state as it had been. Most frequently, however, these visitors arrived in the middle of the night; and they were often away again before morning—sometimes the young men, Ambrose and Luke, with them. The effect of this stir and commotion seemed decidedly beneficial as regarded the younger members

of the family ; they had been vegetating before without anything to excite them—now they were alive again. They had plenty to talk of to each other ; and the arrival of the strangers was always an animating event. In short, they were in their element again.

With respect to Lilly, this change of circumstances made very little difference ; her routine of work was the same ; and, when she had finished what she had to do, or was unable from fatigue or want of light to do more, she sat down on a little stool that was appropriated to her, took out her stocking and darned away at it, till one or other of the young women bade her go to bed. Whilst she was present, the conversation went on exactly as if she were absent—secrets of all sorts were discussed before her with perfect unreserve—Lilly was a nonentity—too dull to listen, too stupid to understand. And they were quite right ;—Lilly never thought about what they were saying, or had said—

all she cared for was the moment when she should be allowed to lay her head on her pillow; and, as soon as she did so, she was fast asleep. When she awoke the next morning, she thought only of what she had got to do, and indulged in no abstract retrospections. Frequently, by the state in which she found things, she knew that people must have been there in the night; but this awakened no curiosity. It might be truly said of Lilly, that sufficient for the day was the evil thereof—she never looked forward nor backward; all she had to do was to rub on.

Meanwhile, Jacob grew worse and worse; and, whilst he was wholly confined to his room, his sons and daughters frequently alluded to the approaching dissolution of their parent in Lilly's presence; but neither did this make any impression on her, for she had no precise conception of what death was; nor did she foresee that the departure of the old man would inspire her with any regret.

CHAPTER II.

THE DEATH OF JACOB, AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE
RYLAND FAMILY TO THE READER.

“Lilly!” said Jacob, to the little girl, one evening, “Lilly, I don’t think I shall live through the night. Are Ambrose and Luke at home?”

“No,” replied Lilly; “I haven’t seen ’em to-day.”

“I heard some people here in the night—I suppose they went away with them; did they?”

“I don’t know,” answered Lilly.

“I should like to speak to my daughters,” said Jacob, after a pause; “go and tell them so, Lilly;” and Lilly quitted the room, whilst Jacob, sighing heavily, with considerable effort turned his face towards the door.

After a lapse of some minutes, the two sisters entered the room.

“ Do you want us ? ” inquired Charlotte.

“ Yes,” answered Jacob—“ I don’t think, Charlotte, I shall live through the night.”

“ Pooh ! ” returned his daughter ; “ that’s all fancy—you’re no worse than you generally are.”

“ God knows, I’ve no need to be worse,” answered Jacob ; “ but I’m sure I can’t live long.”

“ So you’ve said these three months,” returned Charlotte.

“ You make yourself worse by giving way to these fancies,” said Anna.

“ Fancies ! ” echoed Jacob — “ however, never mind”—and here he paused again—“ but there’s one thing I wish to say, before I go.”

“ Well, what is it ? ” asked Charlotte.

“ I should like to have spoken to Ambrose and Luke,” continued Jacob ; “ but Lilly says they’re out.”

“They’re away with Hans,” answered Anna.

At the name of Hans, the dying man’s face contracted—but he said nothing—he knew it was useless.

“It’s about Lilly that I wanted to speak to you,” said Jacob.

“What about her?” asked Charlotte.

“You treat that child too harshly,” continued he.

“Harshly!” echoed both the sisters. “We don’t treat her harshly. Besides, how else could anybody treat such a stupid lump?”

“Remember, she wasn’t born to it,” urged Jacob.

“Oh, pooh!” returned Charlotte; “what does that signify now?”

“Well,” said Jacob, “I’m going as fast as I can go—I only tell you—when you’re where I am, you’ll see things other than you do now. I was just the same myself once, and see what it has brought me to—and yet, I don’t think I was, either.”

“ You don’t! That’s a good un,” exclaimed Charlotte.

“ I had *some* feeling even when I was at the worst,” continued the old man, speaking feebly; “ and, when my father was shot in the knee by the Lieutenant at St. Mary’s, I carried him on my shoulders through the surf, and got him into the boat, and he died aboard his own cutter after all, instead of being swung up to the yard-arm, or rotting in a jail for the rest of his days—that *is* some comfort, at any rate.”

“ I’m sure talking in this way can’t do you any good,” said Charlotte; “ we’d better go, and send Lilly up to you.”

“ Ah, Lilly!” said Jacob; “ you *should* have some feeling for that child—remember, as I said before, she wasn’t born to it.”

“ What’s the use of bothering about Lilly at this time of day?” said Anna; “ she must take things as other people do.”

“ Besides, Lilly’s very well satisfied,” re-

joined Charlotte. "She knows no better. But, come, Anna, there's only Lilly below; we'd better go down."

"You'll be better to-morrow, if you don't think so much about it," said Anna, as she left the room.

"I shall be dead to-morrow," said Jacob, in a feeble voice, whilst his eyes filled with unaccustomed tears, and the white lip quivered.

"No such thing! we'll send you up a cup of tea," said Anna, following her sister—and the door closed upon "these daughters."

In about half an hour, Lilly entered the room with the tea; and, with her assistance, Jacob sipped a little of it. "Lilly," he said, "I'm sure I shan't live through the night; and it's hard to be left to die alone—do you think you could keep awake, and sit up with me?"

"I'll try," answered Lilly.

"Do," said Jacob; "come when they go

to bed; and you can sit here in the arm-chair, beside me; and then, if you fall asleep, I can wake you."

In due time, the sisters retired to their chamber. We must do them the justice to say that they did not believe their father's death so near—if they had, they might possibly have paid him another visit; but he had been long ill, and they did not see sufficient alteration in him to justify his apprehensions; so they went to bed, and Lilly, without mentioning Jacob's request to them, prepared for her vigil—or rather for her nap in the arm-chair—for, though she did her utmost to keep herself awake, she had not taken up her position half an hour, before she was as sound asleep as ever she was in her life.

There lay the dying man, and there sat the sleeping child—and all the house was silent, except the dull ticking of the clock on the landing-place, at the top of the stairs, and the occasional moans of the departing spirit.

The minutes, so fleet and so slow, had thus glided on, till the hour-hand of the clock pointed at two ; and then Lilly dreamed that she had overslept herself, and that Charlotte and Anna were dragging her out of bed by the arm, and yet she did not wake. To wake Lilly, the tired child, who never had her full allowance of sleep, was, at all times, a difficult task ; and to wake her thus prematurely, was still more difficult.

“ Lilly ! wake ! wake ! ” cried Jacob, grasping her arm. “ What o’clock is it ? ” asked he eagerly, when, with great difficulty, the child had opened her eyes ; “ what o’clock is it ? Isn’t it yet the middle of the night ? ”

“ I don’t know,” answered Lilly, quite bewildered and not recollecting where she was.

“ See ! ” he said ; “ see ! for God’s sake ! Go, look at the clock ! ”

“ It’s just two,” said Lilly, as soon as she had ascertained the fact ; to do which she had

only to open the door of the room, as the clock was close at hand.

“ I thought so !” exclaimed Jacob, in a voice of terror ; “ and the Lord have mercy on my soul !”

“ Will you have some barley-water ?” asked Lilly, who did not comprehend what he meant.

“ See !” said Jacob, “ they’re coming to fetch me with fiery swords, and sulphur and brimstone—don’t you see how they blaze ?” whilst his eyes stared wildly at the window ; and Lilly, now being thoroughly awake, became conscious that the room was actually lighted by a preternatural light—for it was mid winter, and yet, though they had only a feeble rushlight, every object was illuminated by a lurid glare ; and Lilly had ascertained the hour by this unaccustomed light alone.

“ Oh, Lilly !” he said, “ I’ve led a wicked life, and now I shall burn for it !” and the rickety bedstead shook with the convulsive

terrors of the expiring sinner. “I’m going!” he ‘gasped out — “I’m going! I feel I’m going!”

“Shall I call my cousins?” asked Lilly, from her natural or acquired obtuseness less alarmed than might be supposed.

“Call who?” said Jacob, whose speech grew every moment more difficult.

“My cousins,” answered Lilly; “shan’t I call them, uncle?”

“I’m not your uncle—they’re not your cousins!” gasped Jacob. “Oh, Lilly, pray for me—it was a great sin, and now I shall burn in Hell for it, I’m afraid—I wish it had never happened—better for you if you had gone to the bottom like the rest. Do you hear what I say, Lilly?”

“Yes, uncle,” replied Lilly, who heard, but obscurely understood.

“I’m not your uncle, child, I tell you—you’re a stranger to me and mine—but, oh, Lord, look there! They’re coming, they’re

coming!" And when Lilly cast her eyes to the window, certainly the sight was enough to alarm any one with less reason for fear than Jacob; the glare of light was so great, that she could distinguish every object in the cabbage-garden adjoining the house as clearly as if the sun were shining at noon-day. "Pray for me, Lilly, pray for me! you're innocent, and the Lord may hear you!" But Lilly only stood bewildered and frightened—for the extraordinary light and the expiring man's terrors had frightened her by this time—she knew nothing about praying. What she would have done, had she dared, would have been to call Charlotte and Anna; but she thought they would be angry with her for disturbing them.

Just at this crisis, a loud knocking at the door below elicited another cry of terror from the dying man, and startled Lilly out of her perplexity. When any visitor arrived after the door was closed for the evening, it

was her business to open it, provided she were still up ; and, forgetting that her being so now was an irregularity, she proceeded mechanically to do her accustomed duty.

“ Is Mr. Littenhaus at home ? Are the young men here ? ” inquired a youth of about thirteen, with a voice and features of great anxiety.

“ My uncle is up stairs in bed,” answered Lilly ; “ and Ambrose and Luke are out.”

“ Is there nobody here can help us ? ” said the boy ; “ the mill’s on fire—where’s your lad ? ”

“ Short Bill’s in bed,” said Lilly.

“ Where ? ” said the boy ; “ call him, will you ? He might be of some use.”

“ I don’t know whether I may,” said Lilly ; “ he sleeps in the loft.”

“ I’ll call him myself, then,” said the boy ; and, suiting the action to the word, he immediately proceeded to wake Short Bill—not a very easy matter either—and, having secured

his assistance, and the use of the stable buckets, they set off together in the direction of the mill; whilst Lilly, having so far watched the progress of the affair, and seen them depart, ascended again to the sick man's room.

“It's the mill that's on fire, uncle,” said she; “and that's what makes the light;” but Jacob did not answer. He lay on his back, with his features distorted, his lips apart, and the dim eye open. Lilly stood for a moment looking at him, and then, in a doubtful voice, again murmured “uncle!” but still there was no answer—and then a strange feeling began to creep over Lilly—she saw that that of which she had heard such frequent predictions had at length happened—Jacob Littenhaus was dead. Still she stood, as if rooted to the spot, with her eyes fixed upon his face—she could neither turn them away, nor move from the bedside. And yet it was not altogether fear that kept her there; it was rather won-

der and some gleams of strange thoughts awakening in her dull brain—confused and indistinct, and yet absorbing. Gradually, however, the features of the dead man became less visible; a shadow fell over them, till little by little they faded from her view, and she found herself in darkness—the fire at the mill had burnt itself out, and the room was no longer illuminated. Then Lilly crept away to her own room, where she threw off her clothes and was presently fast asleep.

At seven o'clock in the morning, her dream of the night was realized. As was to be expected, she overslept herself, and she was awakened by the angry voice of Charlotte, calling her “A lazy, good-for-nothing thing.” Heavy and stupid with want of rest, she jumped out of bed, got into her clothes the best way she could, and ran down stairs to overtake her morning’s work. When she passed the door of Jacob’s room, she suddenly remembered the occurrences of the night, but

she did not dare stop to look in upon him, though she wished to do it; the angry voices of her cousins below, complaining that the fire was not lighted in the kitchen, warned her to make haste.

“ You little good-for-nothing lazy wretch !” said Anna, “ here’s nearly eight o’clock” (in reality it was just half-past seven), “ and not a spark of fire in the grate; instead of the kettle being on and the water boiled for breakfast.”

Lilly made no answer—she never did—she only laid the wood in the grate, and gathered up the ashes and small coals to put over it; and then, having set it alight, puffed away with the bellows with all her might and main, till having got up a flame and set on the kettle, she could proceed with her other work. In the mean time, the sisters performed such little offices as they reserved for themselves; and when the table was prepared, and the water boiled, they sat down to breakfast.

“Lilly!” said Anna presently, “here, take up your uncle’s tea;” for to do this was Lilly’s business every morning.

Lilly left off what she was doing, and approached the table, blushing up to the eyes; she understood very well that a dead man wanted no tea; but, in the first place, she was afraid to say that Jacob was dead; and, in the next, she did not feel very certain of the fact. She might have been mistaken in the night. So she silently took the tea and bread and butter, and ascended the stairs. When she reached the room, she laid them down on the floor, whilst she opened the door and peeped in. The curtain was closed, and she stepped forward and drew it aside—there he lay, exactly as she last saw him—it was quite clear that he was dead. She felt no fear, but stood still and looked at the wan and wasted features, till there arose a swelling about her heart, and the first tears that Lilly had shed for many a day

began to steal down her cheeks. She became conscious of a feeling of forlornness, which, whilst Jacob lived, helpless as he was, she had never experienced. Or, perhaps the concussion that this event had given to her nervous system had so far aroused her from the torpor which had overgrown and stifled her sensations, that she now first became in some degree sensible of her situation. She longed to stay where she was; she would have liked to sit down on the bed and let her tears flow; but she heard Anna's voice loud in the lobby; so, closing the door softly, she took up the breakfast and descended the stairs again.

“ Well, what have you brought the breakfast back for?” inquired Anna, who was waiting ready to give her a thump upon the shoulders in order to quicken her movements.

“ Uncle's dead,” said Lilly.

“ Dead !” cried Anna, and calling Charlotte

they both proceeded towards his room, whilst Lilly began to wash up the tea-things.

The sisters were still up stairs, when the outer door opened and Short Bill entered, loaded with bags and boxes, as many as he could carry.

“Where’s missuses?” said he.

“They’re up stairs,” answered Lilly; “uncle’s dead!”

“Dead! is he?” said Bill, “whew! and the mill’s burnt; and there’s Muster Ryland and his boy, and all the things they’ve been able to save, which arn’t much, to be sure, a coming here; and they wanted to borrow the shander-a-dan, to send away their missus to her sister’s at Hotham, ’cause she’s got herself burnt shocking, trying to save her bits of duds, but I told un young masters had got it away some where; and so they’re bringing her along here, I believe—you’d better go up and tell ’em.”

Scarcely were the sisters informed of this

impending incursion, ere the cavalcade arrived — Dame Ryland on the miller's old horse, led by her son Philip, the boy who had fetched Short Bill in the night, with Matthew Ryland, the father, and his man, bearing some other articles rescued from the flames.

Their reception at the Black Huntsman was not very gracious, but, as the house was empty, there was no excuse for denying them admittance. Betwixt grief and pain, poor Mrs. Ryland was suffering so much, that her husband desired her to go immediately to bed ; whilst he and his son got some breakfast. The miller was sadly depressed, but Philip, a fine, open-countenanced, spirited lad, did his best to comfort him. He was also very affectionate to his mother, taking up her tea himself, and attending carefully to her necessities.

When the breakfast was over, the father and son ascended to the sick woman's room, where they staid some time, condoling with

each other ; after which, leaving her in charge of the boy, the poor miller walked to Trentisy —so the mill was called—once more to view the wreck of his little property.

So passed the first morning of their misfortunes. In the afternoon, he returned and sat down to dinner with the sisters, but, being too heart-sick to eat, quitted the table and went away to his wife. Philip, however, on whom sorrow made less impression, ate heartily enough ; chatting away unreservedly on the events of the night. It appeared that the fire had broken out at about half-past one, in a little shed adjoining the mill ; but the wind being unluckily in such a direction as to carry it to the main building, the whole premises, dwelling and all, were soon in flames.

“ But how did it happen ? ” inquired Anna.

“ We don’t know,” replied Philip. “ Jem, our man, had been in there with a lantern after dark ; but he declares that he never opened it, and that it’s impossible he could

have left any fire behind him. But father saw a man in a sailor's jacket near the mill, just at dusk, with a pipe in his mouth; and he thinks perhaps he set it on fire."

In the evening, about eight o'clock, the wheels of the shander-a-dan were heard approaching; and Charlotte went out to communicate to her brothers the events of the day, before they entered the house. "Father was dead—the mill was burnt down, and the Rylands had all taken refuge at the Black Huntsman!" This last item of the intelligence was the only one that seemed to make much impression on the young men.

"Why did you take them in?" was the first question.

"How could we help it?" asked Charlotte, "when there wasn't a creature in the house but ourselves? We should have had the whole neighbourhood up in arms against us."

"But when do they go?" asked Ambrose; "Hans and Locksley will be here to-morrow

night, and they'll be confoundedly in our way."

"Perhaps they may be gone," answered Anna, who here joined the conference; "for there's Ryland inquiring if that is the shander-a-dan come back—he wants to borrow it to-morrow to carry his wife to her sisters."

"Let them have it," said Luke. "Any thing to get them away!"

"I'll go and tell them so," said Anna.

"I say, Luke," said Charlotte, drawing her youngest brother aside, "Ryland's boy says that his father saw a man in a sailor's jacket, smoking his pipe, near the mill last night, at dusk."

"He does?" said Luke.

"The boy told us so at dinner!" answered Charlotte.

"Confounded ass!" exclaimed he.

"Who? Ryland?" inquired Charlotte.

"No. Hans Peffer," returned Luke impatiently.

Charlotte's eye glanced at her brother, but she made no remark. She did not desire to know any more—indeed what need? That single exclamation revealed every thing—in ignorance was security—what she did not know, or only guessed, she could not be made responsible for.

After some further conference, the brothers entered the house; and presently afterwards Ryland came down to have some conversation with them.

“Are you insured?” asked Luke, a question he could have answered himself.

“No,” replied Ryland; “no, fool as I was—I thought to save the money; and we were so careful, I thought it impossible an accident *could* happen.”

“And how *did* it happen?” inquired Ambrose.

“It's hard to say,” answered Ryland. “God forgive me, if I am wrong! but I can't help suspecting a man I saw lurking about

just at nightfall, with a pipe in his mouth. I didn't like the looks of him somehow, at the time."

"But what motive could he have for doing you a mischief? But perhaps you think it was the pipe?"

"I don't know," returned Ryland. "There was nothing in the shed so very combustible; and a person must have taken uncommon pains to set it on fire with a pipe—he might have shaken out the ashes of twenty pipes without coming across any thing that would take fire—there was nothing but the walls, in short, for the floor was stone."

"It's very improbable any body should have set fire to your mill," said Luke. "It would need pretty good proof to make me believe that; unless, to be sure, you've been making an enemy of any body."

"I've no enemy that I know of," replied Ryland; "but there's some folks you know as is every body's enemy, because every body's

theirs. I can't tell—but I've a notion there's been something going on in these here parts as shouldn't !”

“ What do you mean ?” inquired Ambrose.

“ Two or three times, when I've been returning late from market,” answered the miller, “ I've seen two fellows acrossing the heath, as I didn't like the looks on ; and this here chap with the pipe was one of them.”

“ Then, you recognised him ?” said Ambrose sharply.

“ And you'd know him again, I dare say ?” said Luke.

“ I warrant me !” said Ryland, “ if he only comes in my way—and I'll lay hands on him too, as sure as my name's Mat Ryland ; and make him give an account of himself !”

“ That's a bold resolution of yours,” said Ambrose. “ Fellows of that sort are apt to be desperate—I'd rather give him a wide berth, if I were you.”

“ No, no ! Mr. Ryland's right,” said Luke

gravely ; “ especially if he has any grounds of suspicion against this man.”

“ I’ve no further grounds than that I can’t account for the fire, except it was done on purpose,” returned Ryland ; “ and I can see nobody to suspect, unless it was that chap with the pipe. However, whoever it was, he has ruined me and my family—made beggars of us. I laid out all the money I had saved upon the mill ; thinking it would be a good provision for my life, and for my poor boy and his mother after me. And now it’s nothing but a heap of ashes !”

In the midst of his misfortunes and lamentations, however, the miller did not forget his wife. He wished her to be with her sister, who resided at Hotham, where she would be better attended, and in the neighbourhood of a surgeon ; so he again broached the subject of the shander-a-dan. If they would lend it him, he would take her over the next day.

“ It was quite at his service.” This was in

short exactly what they wished ; and of course no difficulties were made. So, on the following day, the Ryland family, father, mother, and son, started for Hotham, in the shander-a-dan, driven by Short Bill.

“ I shall leave my boy with the old woman for a day or two,” said Matthew, “ but I must come back myself to-morrow night, for I must try and see Sir Lawrence on Friday morning.”

“ By the by,” said Luke, “ he’s your landlord as well as ours. What will he do in this business, think you ?”

“ I paid him ground rent, but the mill was my own, you know,” said Ryland. “ I wish now it hadn’t been, for he’s an uncommon good landlord.”

“ He’d have rebuilt it,” said Luke. “ Perhaps he will now ?”

“ I wish he would,” answered the miller—
“ I’d pay him a good rent for it.”

As soon as the Rylands were gone, the two

young men started on foot for the village, to order a coffin for their father, and make arrangements for his funeral; which they proposed should take place on the day after the ensuing one, which would be Friday.

They had a great deal to discuss on the road, and Ambrose's first words were as they walked away,

“ Suppose Sir Lawrence rebuilds the mill, what will you have got by your scheme then ?”

“ We must outbid Ryland,” said Luke ; “ whatever he'll give, we'll give more. It would be worth more to us than to any body.”

“ No doubt of that,” said Ambrose ; “ if there must be a mill there at all.”

As they passed the Red Lion, Lacy was standing at the door. “ Good morning !” said he. “ So your neighbour, Mat Ryland, has met with a misfortune ?”

“ Yes, the mill's down,” said Ambrose.

“ How did it happen ?” inquired Lacy.

“ Nobody seems to know,” answered the other.

“ His man was going about with a light after dark, and I suppose he dropped a spark,” said Luke.

“ When there’s a fire, people are always surprised and wonder how it could happen,” said Lacy, “ when they needn’t look much further than their own noses for the cause — it’s generally the carelessness of servants.”

“ Yes,” answered Ambrose ; “ I’m always expecting Short Bill will set our stables on fire.”

“ No, no !” said Lacy ; “ never fear Short Bill. He’s the carefulest ostler ever I had ; and I wish you hadn’t taken a fancy to him. But where’s Mat Ryland staying ?”

“ He’s gone to Hotham, with his wife and son,” said Luke.

“ He should have seen Sir Lawrence first,” said the host.

“ He’s shockingly down about his mill,” observed Luke.

“ Let him go to his landlord,” said Lacy, nodding significantly.

“ Will he build the mill again for him, think you ?” asked Luke.

“ Let him try him !” said Lacy, looking as if he knew more than he wished to tell. “ Ryland was always a well-doing man ; and Sir Lawrence won’t let him fall through, if he can help it.”

It was not very difficult, by a little adroit questioning, an art which Luke well understood, to extract from the worthy host, who was proud of his familiarity with Mr. Cobb, the agent, that he had seen that gentleman, and had good reason for supposing that the Baronet’s intentions were very favourable to the miller. This information was far from agreeable ; and, as the brothers walked home, they discussed the question in all its bearings. In the evening, Short Bill returned with the

shander-a-dan—Ryland intending to return on foot the following day.

At the accustomed hour, Lilly retired to bed, as usual ; and when she descended the next morning, she perceived that there had been visitors there in the night ; but this was by no means an uncommon event, and awakened no surprise in her mind.

Early in the day, the undertaker arrived from the village with the coffin, in which poor Jacob's body was placed ; and it was arranged that, on the following morning, it should be driven in the shander-a-dan to the churchyard, where the Rev. Mr. Marsh would be ready to perform the funeral ceremony. The coffin was therefore screwed down at once, that there might be no further necessity for the undertaker's attendance.

Lilly had been often into the room to look at the old man, and she thought about him and felt about him, more than she had ever thought or felt on any subject before. The

circumstances of his death had struck her, and the missing her daily attendance on him had awakened a chord in her heart. Not naturally a morose man, though a weak and ignorant one, and softened by sickness and sorrow, and the bitter sense of his children's neglect, he had been used to speak kindly to her; often gratefully; now, she never heard any thing but harsh and imperious commands; except indeed from Shorty, as, by way of abbreviating his name, the ostler was frequently called—he treated her as his fellow-servant, and as civilly as he would have treated any other. And Lilly felt a pang when the old man's face was hidden from her; and she descended to her work below, after the undertaker's departure, with a sadder sense of desolation than she had ever known before. Somehow, all at once, a gleam had penetrated the thick darkness that had overshadowed her intellect and feelings; and from being a mere piece of mechanism, she

was aroused into the consciousness that she was something more. That night, when Lilly went to bed, she cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER III.

SOMETHING MYSTERIOUS.

The room in which Lilly slept was at the top of the house ; on one side of it was that where lay Jacob in his coffin — on the other, was an apartment that was never inhabited. It was full of boxes and packages, empty or full ; and the door of it was always kept locked. There were two other rooms on the same floor, but they were unfurnished and never occupied, either. The young men and women slept on a lower story.

Lilly, like children in general, especially over-worked ones, was a heavy sleeper ; from the time she laid her head on the pillow, till custom awakened her at a precise hour in the morning, no sound ever disturbed her rest.

Many a night there were heavy feet upon the stairs ; and voices and rummagings in the adjoining apartment, but she never heard them ; and her bed, with herself in it, might have been placed in the shander-a-dan and carried across the common, without awakening her.

But on this night — the one preceding Jacob's funeral—Lilly found herself in a condition altogether new to her—she could not sleep. She was feverish and restless—turning from side to side—dozing a little, and then waking with a start. She was thirsty too, and would have given the world for a draught of cold water, but there was none in her room. Lilly wondered what was the matter with her, as the weary hours dragged on to the middle of the night ; when at length she fell into a sounder sleep. But she had not slept above an hour, when she awoke again, more uncomfortable than ever ; and, with her mouth so parched that she felt she must make a desperate effort to get some water, though

she would have to fetch it from the bottom of the house in the dark. So she crawled out of bed, felt for her shoes, threw her frock which lay by the bedside over her shoulders, and softly opened the door. But suddenly it occurred to her that there was some water in Jacob's room. There had been, at least, before his death; and, as she had never thought of emptying the pitcher since, it was doubtless there still. To get it there was much easier than going below, so she turned in that direction, found the door, and entered the room. But it was pitch dark, and she had some difficulty in steering her way betwixt the bed and the coffin, so as to avoid striking against either. However, she found the water-jug; and, having taken a draught, was just preparing to carry it with her to her own room, when she saw a gleam of light and heard feet upon the stairs.

“Oh, my!” thought Lilly; “they’re going to the store-room:” so the one next hers was

called. "I hope they won't see my door open!" and she stood still, listening to the footsteps, intending to slip into her own chamber as soon as she heard them enter the other.

But it was not there these disturbers of the night were going; and it was fortunate for her that the bed intervened betwixt her and the door; for she had only just time to conceal herself in the scanty folds of the curtain before they were in Jacob's room. As it was, she must infallibly have been discovered, but that the spot where she stood remained quite in the shade — she could see those who entered perfectly, though they did not see her.

First, came Luke Littenhaus, carrying a candle, which he held so as to light those who followed. These were Hans Peffer, and a man called Locksley, who had frequently visited the house after nightfall; and who, as well as his associate, wore the habit of a

sailor. They ascended the stairs but slowly, for they bore between them a heavy burthen; one supported the head, and the other the feet of a corpse. Behind them came Ambrose, with a slow and heavy step.

“That’ll do,” said Luke, as they mounted the last stair; “now, this way,” he continued, pointing to the bed, and “pitch him down there, whilst we open the coffin.”

The body was accordingly laid upon the bed, close to where Lilly stood.

“Did you bring up the screwdriver?” inquired Locksley.

“To be sure I did,” said Luke, proceeding at once to unscrew the lid of the coffin, whilst Ambrose, pale and grave, stood back, leaning against the wall.

“Come, bear a hand, will you?” said Luke to his brother, when the lid was off.

“Hans, do it!” said Ambrose, turning away, whilst Hans advanced; and Luke, with

his assistance, lifted out the body of his father, and placed it on the bed.

“Now, then,” said he, as they took up the other and deposited it in the coffin; “if that isn’t a neat job, I don’t know what is!” and, as he spoke, he replaced the lid and screwed it down as it was before. They then wrapped Jacob’s body in the rug that covered his own bed, Hans and Locksley lifted it between them, and Luke preceding them with the light, and Ambrose following them, they descended the stairs in the same order they had mounted them; scarcely a dozen words having been spoken amongst them since they entered the room.

Lilly did not faint, as heroines usually do on such occasions; but, when her ear assured her they had reached the bottom of the stairs, she took up her water-jug and stole back to bed, where she passed the remainder of the night in a restless and uneasy sleep.

It was a hard matter for Lilly to rise in

the morning, for her head ached violently ; and she felt, altogether, as she had never felt before in her life ; but she dressed herself and went down stairs to her work, as usual ; nobody observed she was ill, and she could not venture to mention it. Neither Ambrose nor Luke were there ; nobody, indeed, besides Charlotte and Anna, except Short Bill.

About ten o'clock, the young men returned in the shander-a-dan ; and, by their conversation, she understood they had been getting some articles of mourning for the funeral. At eleven, one of the undertaker's men arrived, and with his assistance the coffin was brought down and placed in the vehicle, which was to transport it to the churchyard. Short Bill mounted the box, and drove away at a gentle pace, whilst Ambrose and Luke followed on foot with the undertaker's man. In the afternoon they returned, and the remainder of the day passed without any occurrence.

That night Lilly slept very heavily; so much so, that she had to be awakened in the morning, to the great displeasure of her cousins; who were in unusual haste for their breakfast, as they were about to start on an expedition to visit Miss Grosset, the dress-maker, at Hotham. Poor Lilly could scarcely lift her eyelids; they seemed glued together; whilst her head felt so like a lump of lead, that she thought she could never raise it from the pillow; however, with that passive submission which she had so long exercised, she dragged herself out of bed, and hastened down stairs. But her generally pale face was now so flushed, that her illness forced itself on the attention of her cousins. They observed that she must have a cold, and agreed to bring her some medicine from the town.

When they were gone, she was in the house alone. Ambrose she had not seen all day—Luke was at home, but engaged in some outdoor work—and thus, having nobody to drive

her, and feeling overcome with illness, she lay down upon the floor before the kitchen fire and went to sleep. By and by she was awakened by somebody pulling her arm.

“Lilly !” said a voice, “Lilly, girl ! wake, will you ?” Lilly started up, expecting a scolding—but it was Philip Ryland—the door of the house was open, and he had found his way to the kitchen in search of somebody to speak to.

“I say, Lilly,” said the boy, “where’s my father ?”

“I don’t know,” answered Lilly, slowly, after staring at him for some time in silence.

“Is he out ?” inquired Philip.

“I don’t know,” replied Lilly again, with a bewildered countenance.

“Didn’t he sleep here ?” said Philip.

“Sleep here !” answered Lilly. “I don’t think he did.”

“Did he go away to the village, then, and not come back ?”

"I can't tell," said Lilly.

"Well, but he was here yesterday!"

"Was he?" said Lilly. "I didn't see him!"

"But when did you see him?" asked Philip.

"Well, I think it was Tuesday—no, it was Wednesday, when he went away in the shander-a-dan—I saw him!"

"What, hasn't he been here since?" exclaimed Philip.

"I don't know," said Lilly, with an air of strange uncertainty.

"Oh, then he must have altered his mind and gone on to the village at once, I suppose. But I say, Lilly, what's the matter with you?"

"I can't tell," answered the little girl. "I've got a bad pain in my head!"

"You look just as I did when I had the measles," said Philip. "You ought to go to bed—the doctor made *me* go to bed, and I had to stay there till I was well."

“ I mustn’t go to bed,” said Lilly.
“ Cousins would be angry.”

“ Pooh !” answered Philip ; “ people must go to bed when they’re ill, you know. Where *are* your cousins ?”

“ Anna and Charlotte are gone to Hotham,” answered Lilly ; “ but Luke’s at home somewhere—perhaps he’s in the stable.”

“ I’ll go and look for him,” said Philip.

When he was gone, Lilly made an effort to rise and go about her work again, but it was with extreme difficulty she could keep herself on her feet. Meantime, Philip sought Luke and found him, but could obtain no information about his father. He had certainly not been at “ the Black Huntsman” since he departed thence with his wife in the shander-adan. It was clear he had gone on at once to the village ; and thither Philip proceeded to seek him.

So the day wore on, without any other event than the arrival of a traveller, who, after

baiting his horse and taking some refreshment, proceeded on his way.

At night the sisters returned; and so did Philip shortly afterwards.

“I can’t hear anything of my father,” said he. “He hasn’t been to the village;—Mrs. Lacy hasn’t seen him, and he’d have been sure to go there.”

“Did you see Mr. Cobb?” said Luke. “Perhaps he’d go straight to Sir Lawrence!”

“No,” said Philip, “for Mr. Cobb had been at the Lion just before I got there, inquiring for my father, and wondering he hadn’t seen him. Sir Lawrence is going to rebuild the mill for us.”

“Ah, ah!” said Luke. “Lucky for you!”

“But I wish I knew where my father’s gone to!” said the boy, anxiously. “If I go back without finding him, mother’ll be so uneasy!”

It was too late, however, to seek him any

more that night, so Philip went to bed; and on the following morning he started again on foot to return to his mother.

Lilly was considerably better for the medicine her cousins brought her; and the apothecary who sent it, concluding the patient had a cold, having desired she should remain in bed, she was allowed to do so the whole of Sunday. The warmth of the bed brought out the rash—her headache left her; and it was now clear, to an experienced eye, that Lilly had the measles. Her cousins, however, did not understand this; or it is to be hoped they would not have allowed her, as they did, to rise on the second morning and go about her work as usual.

On Monday morning, a man came over from Hotham, sent by Mrs. Ryland, to make inquiries about her husband; but, after extending his search to the village, he returned without any information. He said that Ryland had left Hotham on Thursday afternoon,

as he was to see Sir Lawrence on Friday morning. And now, in the village, a rumour arose that the miller had made away with himself.

On Tuesday, Mrs. Ryland herself arrived, with her son, in a cart, lent her by a baker. She was in great distress, and so was the boy. As she wished to go as far as the village, and the cart could not be further spared, they let her have the shander-a-dan. Her inquiries, however, were as unsuccessful as those of her son had been—no tidings could be heard of Matthew Ryland; and she returned to the “Black Huntsman” in extreme anguish; the persuasion was universal that her husband, in despair at the loss of his property, had committed suicide—probably drowned himself in the sea, on the evening of the day he last parted with her.

And now it occurred to her, that there had been something peculiarly impressive in his leave-taking. He had returned and embraced

her a second time, and affectionately bade her take care of herself and her boy. Was this presentiment of some evil that awaited him? Or was it the tender yearning of the heart in an adieu, which he knew was to be his last?

As there was still an hour or two's daylight, Philip said he would go to the mill to look again if he could find any traces of his father having been there; whilst the poor mother, ill and broken-hearted, went to lie down, requesting that a cup of tea should be sent her. The tea was accordingly made, and Lilly carried it up stairs.

"What's the matter, little girl?" said Mrs. Ryland. "What makes your face so red?"

"I don't know," answered Lilly, in a hoarse voice.

"Why, you have a bad cold or something worse," said she, throwing back a little shawl Lilly had pinned over her neck. "Why, you should be in bed, child—you've got the

measles! Bless me!" continued the good woman, rising hastily, and for the moment forgetting her own misfortunes in her compassion for the neglected child, "how very wrong to let you go about in this way! Come with me down stairs, and I'll speak to your cousins. Bless my heart! don't they see the rash out upon you?"

Not only did Mrs. Ryland's representations procure Lilly leave to go to bed, but the motherly feelings of her benevolent heart being aroused, together with some indignation at the utter indifference and neglect of the cousins, she took upon herself the tending of her; gave her a warm drink, placed barley-water by her bedside, and, after covering her up carefully, promised to see her in the morning. And she did see her; and, as her own stay at the inn was prolonged for several days, she nursed the child through the whole of her illness; and Lilly, probably, owed it to her care that she did not die of the measles.

This prolonged sojourn was owing to a slight circumstance, which, from its satisfying her that her husband had been in the neighbourhood since he quitted Hotham, inspired a faint hope that he was either not far off, or would at least return. Philip had found his father's walking-stick amongst the ruins of the mill; and Mrs. Ryland was certain that he had it in his hand when he went away.

However, this indication of his whereabouts was not followed by any other discovery; and the mother and son returned to Hotham, where she had some relations; leaving the mystery of Matthew Ryland's fate unsolved.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AWAKENING OF LILLY'S HEART, AND SOME ACCOUNT
OF TWO RUSTIC LOVERS.

Lilly had never felt so unhappy in her life as she did on the morning the Rylands left the dreary inn. She was well now, and able to resume her work; but with what a heavy heart she went about it! She had for some days had experience of what kindness and fellowship were, and what a blank it made to lose them! Mrs. Ryland, naturally benevolent and fond of children, could not nurse one through an illness, especially one who excited her compassion, without treating her with a motherly tenderness. The good woman had talked to her too, and had easily gathered from the uncomplaining Lilly that she had more reason for discontent than she was her-

self aware of; and, in the telling of her tale, she learnt in some degree to comprehend her own misfortune; for Lilly, like a horse whose spirit had been broken by ill-treatment at so early an age, that its fire was extinguished and its nature subdued, seemed almost to have descended to a lower grade in the scale of creation.

No play, no instruction, no sympathy, had yet fallen to Lilly's lot in the hard world that surrounded her. She could read a little, as we have said, because she knew her letters before she came to live with the Littenhaus family; and could even spell words of one syllable—and, as it was necessary for their convenience that she should be able to make but names over doors and inscriptions over shops, they had, with sharp words and hard blows, so far pursued her education, but no farther. Nobody ever made an observation to her—she never heard conversation in which she could take an interest; if anybody asked

her a question, her almost invariable answer was, that she didn't know, although it might be something that with the most ordinary attention she might have known. Imperious commands, and abuse for her stupidity—and on this head neither did the few guests that frequented the house spare her—were all the benefits that Lilly derived from God's great gift of speech to man. In short, Lilly Dawson, at the period we first introduced her, was, in feeling and intellect, but one degree removed from the condition of a horse or a dog—and we here mean an ill-used horse or dog—for everybody, who has enjoyed the pleasure of an intimate and friendly association with animals, is aware that they may be as much raised in the scale of existence by an education conducted with gentleness, as Lilly was depressed in that scale by an opposite treatment.

But these few days of sunshine had swelled the bud, if not unfolded the flower, that had

been nipped and withered by the bitter east wind, which had blasted Lilly's young years—she began to feel, and feeling brought thought. Her heart awoke her intellect. She became conscious that she was ill-treated; and, from being dogged, and stolid, and insensible, she came to be unhappy. But she had nobody to whom she could speak of her unhappiness, and her outward demeanour remained unchanged. Had her cousins attended to her, they might have perceived she was less stupid; but, as they did not, they were not aware even of this alteration.

One thought there was, that now constantly haunted Lilly's mind, and that was the recollection of the tender, loving, and confidential intercourse she had witnessed betwixt Mrs. Ryland and her son. Philip had been kind to herself, too; but the thing that had impressed her most was this filial and maternal love. Lilly had never seen love before, in any of its beautiful shapes; and now suddenly it

had been presented to her in the most beautiful of all. It was like a glimpse of that Sun of Grace, which the ancient Pythagoreans and some modern mystics describe as being the centre and grand mover of the universe; it unfolded to her some faint ideas of what human life was, or should be; and of how the world was held together—she beheld for the first time the link that binds it.

And it was curious how the sight of this mutual affection and constant interchange of tender offices reacted upon the forlorn child, filling, as if from its overflow, her desolate heart with love also. Her sympathy was imitative too—she was younger than Philip, yet it seemed to herself that she loved him with the same sort of love his mother felt for him, whilst she loved the mother with the love of the son. Poor Lilly! she was taking her first lesson, reaping her first experience in that lore of the heart, which makes up so

much of the life of every human being, worthy of the form he bears.

And the harvest she reaped was the too common one ; the fruit of her love was pain. Her friends were gone : they had just stayed long enough to tear the veil from her eyes, and show her her own desolation ; and they were gone—probably to return no more ; and not a single gleam of light did the future disclose to the forlorn Lilly Dawson.

It is not to be supposed that the disappearance of the miller excited no sensation in the neighbourhood ; on the contrary, it excited a great deal. At first, the search was not so rigorous as it might have been, because it was hoped he might return ; and inquiries taken up when the sensation is diminished by time are wont to be less energetic. Still the matter was not neglected ; and Sir Lawrence, who had an esteem for the man and regretted the affair altogether, advertised a reward to anybody who could give information of

him dead or alive. Not only was this reward announced in the papers, but bills were posted in all public situations—amongst the rest, two appeared on the stable-walls of the Black Huntsman. The sum offered was one hundred pounds; and nobody had a greater desire to earn it than Short Bill, the ostler, whose head was consequently for ever running on the subject. Every possible and impossible accident that suggested itself to his mind was turned over, weighed, and examined. He poked into every hole and corner he could think of, within an attainable distance; and many a night, when his masters believed him safe asleep in the hay-loft, he was roaming the country in pursuit of the lost Matthew Ryland; or, at least, some traces of him.

The fact was, that nature, who sometimes sets soft hearts in rude frames, had given poor Shorty a very susceptible one; he was in love; and, what was more, his love was returned. The object of his passion, too, was

really a nice, pretty, village maiden; at whose taste everybody wondered. But that did not signify to her; she saw charms in her Shorty, as she called him, which, though invisible to the rest of the world, were not the less real and dear to her; and she was ready to marry him any day in the year, if they could but discover some possible means of living together: but she was as poor as he was, being employed in the most humble services; and they had little expectation of mending their condition, till the baronet's advertisement appeared. This, however, fired their hopes. No one could have greater advantages in the quest than the ostler. He knew every inch of ground and every crank and crevice in the neighbourhood; and he was living close to the spot whence, from the finding of the stick, the track should apparently be followed.

The probability was, however, that Matthew had drowned himself in the sea—to that opinion, at least, the public generally inclined—

a circumstance unfavourable to poor Bill's hopes; except that there was a chance the body might be washed ashore, which had actually been the case with the remains of a lad who had been drowned whilst bathing, not long previously.

Urged by so potent a motive, the ostler's search was indefatigable; and every moment that he could steal from his sleep or his work was spent in roaming the country or wandering along the beach; but, naturally timid, quiet, and silent, he communicated his plans and projects to nobody, and had no confident of his hopes but Winny Weston, his mistress.

Matthew Ryland had now been dead six weeks, and all search for him had been relinquished, except on the part of this rustic lover. The possibility of the body's being cast ashore still urged him to the beach; and he always hastened thither as early after the flow of the tide as he could contrive to get away; but these repeated absences being

at length noticed by his employers, he had been obliged, on pain of losing his situation, to confine his expeditions to the night-time. But even here he was not secure. Some circumstance awakened suspicion; he was watched and detected; and straightway received his dismissal. A servant who employed the dark hours in prowling about the country, would certainly not be a desirable inmate in any family; but there were many powerful reasons why he should be a dangerous one at the Black Huntsman. They, too, had their midnight expeditions; and a rencontre might have been very inconvenient, and possibly have led to fatal consequences.

For certain reasons, these expeditions had been latterly discontinued; the search for Ryland, and the excitement occasioned by his disappearance, had rendered them perilous. Ambrose, too, who somewhat resembled his father—that is, was more weak than wicked—urged by feelings of his own, had been absent.

Ambrose was a smuggler—his father had been a smuggler before him—he was born and bred to the trade, and practised it without the least remorse of conscience; but he had a horror—a weak one Luke thought it—of shedding human blood; except, indeed, in the way of a fair fight—then he would not have minded it.

But Ambrose having returned, and the gossip and curiosity excited about Matthew Ryland's affair having died away, it was considered time to begin business again; especially as Mr. Fortune, the silk-mercier at Hotham, hinted that the ladies were beginning to be impatient for the spring silks—“and nothing would go down with them, but they must be French.”

The dismissal was a sad blow to the ostler. The Red Lion did not want him; besides, he had offended Mr. Lacy by leaving his service for the Black Huntsman; because the young men, who perceived some qualities

in him very suitable for their purpose, had offered him higher wages. They had selected him because he did not appear to have a single idea beyond his business; and because he was silent and solitary, and spent the greatest part of his leisure asleep; having no curiosity and troubling himself with no man's business but his own. Indeed, he was looked upon as a sort of half-witted person, who had only just sense enough for his vocation, and no more, and therefore a very safe inmate. And they had judged him correctly. He liked his situation exceedingly; for he had good wages, with little work, and had frequent opportunities of seeing his dear Winny. For the rest, he never troubled himself to think, much less to inquire, where the young men had been, when they came home at four or five o'clock in the morning, as sometimes happened, with the horse in a sweat and the shander-a-dan covered with mud. To be sure, he had to get up to clean them; but,

that done, he might generally sleep till mid-day, if he liked—as his masters did.

The Red Lion, as we have said, did not want him; and he saw no chance of getting a situation nearer than Hotham, which would place him quite out of the reach of his dear Winny—a great grief to both of them.

“Wouldn’t they forgive you, Bill?” said Winny, “if you told ’em what took you out, and promised never to do it again—and you might promise, you know, for you’ll never find him now—if he drown’d himself, he’s gone out to sea, or else cast up somewhere else.”

“I’ve a mind to go to-morrow and ax ’em,” answered the lover; “for to-night there’ll be a high spring tide—and if he don’t come ashore this time, I’ll give it up.” And this plan being agreed upon, the lovers parted; for it happened to be a very busy day with Winny. Her mother was by trade a laundress, but unfortunately it was one

scarcely needed at Combe Martin. The poor washed for themselves, and the gentry in their own laundries; and she got very little employment, except sometimes when there was company at the Castle, and more to do than they could get through. Then the overplus went to Mrs. Weston, and this happened to be the case now—so the old woman and her daughter were very busy, and Winny was obliged to leave off love-making and repair to the washing-tub.

“ I’ll go to the beach afore daybreak,” said Shorty, as he took leave of his love; “ and then, if I don’t find nothing, I’ll go to the Huntsman. If so be you don’t see me here in the course of the day, you may reckon they’ve taken me back again; and I shall be in with the shander-a-dan, most like, on Sunday, if not afore.”

CHAPTER V.

MORE MYSTERY.

The conversation which closed our last chapter occurred on a Thursday afternoon. On the Friday morning, when Lilly, who was always expected to be down stairs first, was opening the shutters, she saw a female figure coming hastily across the Heath, in the direction of the house ; a sight so unusual at that early hour, that she paused for a moment to ascertain who it was. The rapidity, however, with which the woman walked, or ran, for her pace was something betwixt both, soon brought her within a recognizable distance ; and then Lilly perceived it was Winny Weston. “ She didn’t know that Shorty had left, and was going to the stable to seek him ”—such

was Lilly's natural conclusion, as she turned away from the window and commenced her daily labours.

But she was mistaken—instead of directing her steps to the stable, as she usually did, Winny turned towards the house; and presently Lilly heard her knocking gently against the door with her knuckles; for she had seen the little girl at the window, and, being eager to speak to her, ventured on thus making her wishes known. We say *ventured*; for visitor's met with little encouragement at the Black Huntsman; and Winny's visits to her lover were always made at such hours, as gave her a chance of escaping a meeting with any of the family.

“Lilly,” said the girl, breathless with haste and agitation, “Lilly, is Shorty here?”

“No,” answered Lilly; “he left yesterday.”

“But isn't he come back?” asked Winny.

“No,” said Lilly; “not that I know of.”

“Not come back!” repeated Winny, look-

ing wildly at her, and sinking into a rude arm-chair made of twisted branches that stood before the door—"not come back!"—and with the corner of her apron she wiped the perspiration from her forehead.

"No," said Lilly; "they sent him away for staying out—haven't you seen him?"

"Yes, yes, we've seen him—we've seen him!" cried the girl, wringing her hands; whilst Lilly, too young and inexperienced in love affairs to comprehend much about her affliction, stood looking at her with perplexed sympathy.

"Are you *sure* he isn't at the stables?" said Winny.

"I don't think he is; I've never seen him," answered Lilly, "but I'll run round and see."

"It's no use! I know it's no use!" said Winny, rising however to follow the child.

The stable was locked, and they knocked and called, but no voice answered.

"He's not here," said Lilly.

“ No ; I knew it was of no use ! ” said Winny, again wringing her hands ; “ I knew it was of no use ! ”

“ Perhaps he’s gone to Hotham to look for a situation,” suggested Lilly, whose ideas, as we have said, were very much brightened of late. *Hotham* to her had formerly been but a name ; but, since the Rylands lived there, it had a sort of tangible existence in her mind, as a place, and indeed one to which she had the greatest desire to go herself.

But Winny could not find much hope in this suggestion. She was too well aware that her lover would not go to Hotham whilst a chance remained of recovering his situation.

When she had departed, which she did without entering into any explanation of the nature of her apprehensions—for, in the first place, she had very little acquaintance with Lilly ; and, in the next, she looked upon her as a stupid child, who could neither sympathise with her distress, nor understand it—

the latter resumed her work, wondering what could be the cause of such violent grief; or, rather, not so much wondering at the cause of the grief as the amount of it; for she supposed Winny's unhappiness arose from Shorty's dismissal; and as she was quite unable to appreciate the pangs of separated lovers, she was surprised at any body being distressed at what appeared to her so desirable a consummation. For her part, she had been envying the ostler's good fortune ever since she heard he was turned off! How glad she would have been to be turned off!—But alas! there was no hope for her—she, as Frederick Douglas told the little boys at Baltimore, of himself, was “a slave for life!” Dreadful, dreadful doom!

In the mean time, Winny directed her steps once more to the beach. She had been there before she came to the Black Huntsman, for the tide had ebbed some hours ago; and she thought Shorty might have concluded

his search, and have been upon his way back by six o'clock; especially, as he had expressed his determination to see his masters early, lest, in the interval, they should engage any body in his place.

However, it was possible that he might have extended his perquisitions farther than he had declared to her he should do. He had, on the previous day, resolved to go as far as Long Point, which was six miles in a direct line along the shore. It was a headland which stretched far into the sea. Beyond it, the coast veered away in another direction; the country was populous—there was a seaport not far off, and plenty of people likely to be in the way to pick up any thing that was washed in. Shorty's hopes therefore naturally terminated at Long Point; and Winny knew that he could well have been there and back, since the tide ebbed. Still, he might have been led further; besides, another thought occurred to her—perhaps he had

found what he had so long sought—and, if so, he would naturally be detained. He must get people to witness his discovery, establish his claim to the reward, and remove the body. For a moment, a gleam of hope lightened Winny's heart, and she quickened her eager steps; but the hope grew faint almost ere it was born—it was stifled by the heavy fear that sat upon her soul—she was sure her lover was dead.

However, she walked on, straining her eyes forwards along the cold, flat, dreary shore, where not a moving object met her view, except indeed the ever-moving ocean, and here and there a screaming sea-bird dipping in the waves. There stood the ruins of the mill—that unlucky mill! the source of all their misfortunes—for in the misfortunes of the Rylands originated theirs. But for the miller's disappearance, Shorty would never have incurred his master's displeasure by his frequent excursions; would not have been dismissed;

and the catastrophe she now apprehended would not have happened. So are our fortunes linked! And so it is, that no act we do, good or ill, or *apparently* indifferent—for it cannot be predicated of any act that it is really indifferent, since some unforeseen results may arise from the most insignificant—no act but may amongst the various ramifications of its effects produce the most important consequences to the well being, not only of ourselves and those connected with us, but of persons seemingly far removed from our sphere.

That unlucky mill! There stood the *bare* walls of the round tower, that had borne the sails. How merrily they used to spin round in the wind, with the busy whirr and the clack-clack! Silent and still now, except for the ill-omened voices of some ravens that were croaking and quarrelling amongst the ruins. But there was nothing else to be seen nor heard—no signs of Shorty; though led on by her anxiety, she walked the whole six

miles to Long Point. There she sat and rested for awhile, and relieved her overcharged breast by a burst of tears. Then suddenly her heart was stirred with the anxiety to get back again to the village—the faint hope that she might have missed him—that he might have gone round by some other way—so she arose and retraced her steps.

During the whole walk, going and coming, she had not met a human being; for, as we have said, the beach was edged by a bare unfruitful common, and there were no houses near the shore. The Black Huntsman stood nearly a mile from the sea; and betwixt that and Long Point, no habitation had existed, except the mill, which was situated on a little prominence, a small way from the beach; and the ascent to it was by a narrow ravine, or cleft, which cut the mount in two. When Winny reached this pass, she paused to decide whether she should continue her way by the water, or ascend the ravine and take the in-

land path to the village. While she was deliberating this point, her eye was caught by a foot-print exactly where she was standing, and, on looking more closely, she could trace several more. On one spot especially, there was a disturbance of the small shingle, that seemed to have been made by the congregating of three or four persons together; and leading from this there was a flat depressed line of about two feet wide, which looked as if something had been rolled or dragged along. It was like the mark left by a wheel; only considerably broader, less regular, and not so deep.

This discovery decided Winny on ascending the little ravine, for it was in that direction the line lay; and it was bordered on each side by indistinct marks of feet. It was clear that somebody had been there since the tide turned, for those shingle-prints were above high watermark. Could they be indications of her lover's fate? Were they the signals of his success? The foot-prints might be his,

and those of others, whom he had got to assist him ; the broad line might have been formed by the dragging up of Ryland's body, which he had been so fortunate as to discover. It had very much the appearance of a mark so formed. A gleam of hope and joy shot through Winny's breast as this possibility occurred to her. The vision of the £100 reward, and then the wedding, and the humble cottage they had set their hearts on, with its little garden well stocked with cabbages, and the sweetwilliams, and the tall hollyhocks, and the big sunflower that *would* peep into the window of a morning, rose up before her. How happy they should be !

For a minute or two, she forgot her fears in her hopes, and she started at a brisk pace up the ascent. When she had passed along the beach before, she had been too eagerly looking forwards to observe the foot-prints, or to turn aside at the mill, although the question had occurred to her for an instant,

why so many dark-looking birds were cawing, and croaking, and hovering about it. But she wondered more now, for there they were still; and the sight and sound caused another revulsion in her breast. What was it that was gathering them together there? Her cheek turned pale and her blood froze at the thought that suggested itself.

However, she need not be long in suspense—the way was short, and she soon reached the spot. The walls of the dwelling-house had mostly fallen in; but those of the mill itself, being built of stone, were still standing; and the whole interior being consumed, formed a sort of area, into which she stepped and looked around.

She breathed again; for there was nothing there to alarm her; except indeed it were the flapping wings of two large magpies who had been quarrelling and chattering in a corner, so busily, that for the first moment, they had not even leisure to be scared by her intrusion;

but when she advanced a step, they flew away ; leaving behind them what seemed to have been their bone of contention ; apparently, a small bit of white paper.

Under general circumstances, Winny would never have thought of examining so insignificant an object further, but she was now in that state of mind, wherein nothing seems insignificant. Her lover might have been there — he might have dropped a bit of paper — there might be something written on it that would indicate to whom it had belonged—so she advanced to pick it up. But it was not paper ; it proved to be a small bit of linen, clearly part of the bosom of a shirt, first torn out of the gathers, where it was attached to the collar, and there wrenched off. It was but a morsel ; but the puckering of the gathers were still in it ; and it was so clean that it could not have lain there long. Indeed, it was defiled but by one small spot— but that spot was of blood.

But why should Winny's heart contract at the sight of it? She was quite sure the shirt from which the fragment had been torn was not Shorty's. The linen was white and of a medium texture — not fine, but not very coarse; the shirts he wore were of coarse blue calico. Yet it did contract with a fresh access of apprehension; and she eagerly looked about for any corroborative indications. Except some faint traces of foot-prints in the dust, however, she could discover nothing; and after examining the whole of the ruins, she pursued her way homewards, carrying the morsel of linen with her.

Till we possess the absolute certainty of a much dreaded misfortune, hope is for ever springing up afresh, suggesting this and that possibility of salvation; and now Winny found herself quickening her steps, as she drew near the village—for might she not have missed Shorty by leaving home so early? What, if she found him quietly seated on her mother's

hearth? By this time, the inhabitants were astir and at their daily work, but, except to ask of one or two of Shorty's acquaintance if they had seen him pass, she did not pause till she opened the cottage door.

"Has he been here, mother?" were her first words.

"Not again," said the old woman, looking up from her ironing, and solemnly shaking her head.

"But himself—you haven't seen him?"

"No," answered the mother. "How should I? Have you heard any thing?"

"Nothing," answered Winny. "He hadn't been at the Huntsman, and I walked all the way to Long Point and back—but there's no sign of him," and here Winny sank into a chair and gave way to her tears.

"Who did you see at the Huntsman?" asked Mrs. Weston.

"I saw Lilly, the girl. She said he'd never been there since he left yesterday; and we

went to the stables, but he was not there either."

"I did not expect it," said Mrs. Weston, with a significant shake of the head.

But the poor, and it is one of the advantages of their condition, cannot afford to sit with their hands before them and grieve. There was work to be done, and it was needful that Winny should dry her eyes and set about it; so she put her irons in the fire, took off her bonnet, smoothed her chestnut hair, tied on a clean apron, and took her place at the ironing-board.

"Which way did you go?" inquired the mother.

"I went by the beach and came back by the mill," replied Winny, "for just where the path turns up there were marks of feet. There had been somebody there since high water, that's certain, and they went up to the mill, but I couldn't see any thing except this bit of linen—it's a bit torn off a

shirt ;” and she drew the fragment from her bosom.

“ Yes,” returned Mrs. Weston, “ it looks like it.”

“ Look at the spot on it,” said Winny, handing it to her mother.

“ It’s blood,” said Mrs. Weston.

“ What do you think ?” asked Winny.

“ I wouldn’t think any thing of that,” answered Mrs. Weston : “ it often happens shaving, you know ; and that’s not Shorty’s shirt.”

“ No, it’s not his,” replied Winny ; “ only one can’t help thinking of every thing now.”

After a pause, Winny said, “ There’s a thing I should like to know.”

“ What is it ?” said the mother.

“ Whether aunt Groby saw him last night, when he passed her door ? because then we should know what time it was when he went away. He said the tide would turn at half-

past eleven. When the ironing is done, I'll go and ask her."

Jane Groby, however, spared Winny this trouble by calling herself. "Oh, you're busy!" said she, putting in her head.

"Never mind—come in!" said Winny, "I want to speak to you. Did you see Shorty last night?"

"Yes; he called about ten, and sat a bit with us," answered Jane.

"And what time did he leave?" asked Winny.

"Just at half-past," replied Jane; "but did you hear that they want our Bob to go for ostler at the Huntsman?"

"When did they speak of it?" inquired Winny.

"The first time was about a week ago, when he was up at the Lion, helping Jem; Mr. Ambrose asked him how long he'd been used to horses, and whether he could drive, but he said nothing about hiring him till last

night. When he was going through, he called at the door, and bade Bob go up there to-day. I was surprised, till Shorty came at night, and said they'd turned him off."

"And will you let Bob go?"

"Well, I don't know," answered Jane—"it's a rise for him, to be sure; besides, it's a great thing to get regular work, instead of jobbing about here and there; but John Groby don't seem very willing for it, somehow, though I tell him it's long afore we may get such another chance, without sending him to Hotham; and sending a lad like that into a town is sending him into temptation, like."

"But why don't your husband like it?" inquired Mrs. Weston.

"Just a fancy he's got agen the folks up there, especially Mr. Luke. John can't abide Mr. Luke."

"I can't say as ever I liked the looks of him either," said Mrs. Weston; "but Shorty never made no complaint."

“No,” said Jane; “I asked him about it last night. He says they treated him well enough, and that it was as easy a place as any body need wish—plenty to eat and little to do.”

“But perhaps Shorty mayn’t leave, after all,” said Winny, who did not like to see the door shut against her lover’s hopes of resuming his place. “He means to go to-day to ask them to take him back again.”

“Winny,” said Mrs. Weston, in a reproving tone, “how can you talk so!”

“Well, mother,” said Winny, looking significantly, “you know he meant it.”

“Meant it! Yes, poor mortals as we are, we mean many things that never come to pass,” said Mrs. Weston.

“I dare say Shorty would not be sorry to go to Hotham again,” said Jane, who did not understand the real source of Mrs. Weston’s doubts. “It was a dull life up there for any body as had been used to any thing else.”

“ But he didn’t wish any thing else,” said Winny, “ and Shorty’s not a person that would go to put any body out of their place, if so be he wasn’t sure they wished to leave it.” This was meant for a hint at Jane Groby, and she took it.

“ You needn’t be so sharp, Winny,” said she; “ we’ve no mind to put Shorty out; but if he leaves, you know, our Bob may as well get the chance as another.”

“ Never mind her,” said Mrs. Weston, in a quiet, decided tone; “ if you and John like the place for Bob, let him go about it at once. Shorty’ll never want it.”

“ How can you say so, mother?” exclaimed Winny, bursting into tears; and flinging down her iron, half in grief and half in anger, she quitted the room, and shut herself into the only other apartment the house contained, which was the little bedchamber, where both mother and daughter slept, and which opened from the kitchen or parlour—for it answered

both purposes — where the ironing was going on.

“What’s the matter with Winny?” inquired Jane, with some surprise: “I am sure I did not mean to affront her.”

“Winny’s no herself to-day,” said Mrs. Weston, with a serious countenance, and a slight nod of the head.

“No doubt she’s vexed at Shorty’s losing his place,” said Jane, in a tone that implied an inquiry whether that was the cause of the usually good-humoured Winny’s waywardness.

“No doubt, she is,” replied Mrs. Weston, still ironing away, and looking very grave.

“I hope there’s nothing amiss between Shorty and her?” said Jane.

“No, no!” answered Mrs. Weston. “Poor things, there never was a word betwixt them. Some people wondered at Winny’s fancy for Shorty; and perhaps they might, for no doubt Shorty was nothing to look at; but he was

an honest lad, poor fellow, and that's better than looks."

"There's nothing happened to Shorty, is there?" said Jane, in a tone of excited curiosity; for she was not only struck with Mrs. Weston's demeanour, but also with the marked manner in which she spoke of the ostler in the past tense.

The answer to this question was only a significant shake of the head, and that folding-in of the lips, which denotes that people know more than they intend to tell.

"There was nothing amiss with him last night when I saw him," said Jane, with increasing surprise. "Did you see him after that?"

Mrs. Weston seemed to be considering for a minute or two whether she should evade this interrogation or speak out, and tell her story at once, for she remained silent whilst she deliberately finished ironing the frill of a shirt, not unconscious that Jane's eyes were

fixed upon her with intense interest ; for the visitor felt assured that there was some mystery to be disclosed about Shorty, though of what nature she could not imagine.

By the time the frill was smoothed, Mrs. Weston seemed to have made up her mind to satisfy Jane, and relieve herself, by communicating the secret that was oppressing her ; for she placed her iron on the trivet, and seated herself in a chair opposite to her visitor.

“ The truth is, Jane Groby,”—said she, wiping away the perspiration which had settled on her forehead, partly from the heat of her irons, and partly from the effect of bringing strongly before her mind the details of the event she was about to relate—“ The truth is, there’s some things one don’t like to speak of before folks ; and, may be, if I was to tell you the reason of Winny’s taking on so, you’d just think we were both mad, or something worse.”

“ No, I shan’t,” said Jane.

“ I’d heard of such things at different times,” continued Mrs. Weston ; “ but I can’t say as ever I believed them before—God forgive me !”

“ What things ?” inquired Jane.

“ I mean of the dead coming back.”

“ Eh ?” said Jane, turning rather pale.

“ Ay !” returned Mrs. Weston. “ You know, owing to there being company up at the castle, we’ve had a good deal to do this week, and last night we had to sit up, washing, till near morning. Well, Shorty had been here in the afternoon, telling us how he was turned off, and he and Winny had a deal of talk about it. You see, he’d been going about at night, trying to find Ryland’s body—for there’s no use in making any secret of it now, poor fellow !”

“ Ah, for the one hundred pounds reward !” said Jane.

“ Yes,” continued Mrs. Weston, “ and that’s

the way he got turned off; and last night, as it was a spring tide, he was to go again for the last time; and then he was to go to the Huntsman, and try to get his place again; and if he did, we didn't expect to see nothing more of him till he came in to church to-morrow. Well, it was just past one by the clock there—I was wringing out the last shirt in the tub, and Winny was standing there in the corner, with the jack-towel in her hand, wiping her arms—when we heard a foot coming up the paved walk there, from the garden gate.”

“ Was the door open ?” inquired Jane.

“ Yes, it was,” replied Mrs. Weston. “ The night was close, and we had set it open to let in the air.”

“ Well ?” said Jane.

“ Well,” continued Mrs. Weston, “ naturally we both looked towards the door, and I can't say but I felt a bit frightened to hear any body in the garden at that time of night,

thinking of all the fine linen I'd got here from the castle; and then, again, I thought perhaps it might be Shorty, that had come back from the beach, and seeing by the light that we wasn't in bed, that he was coming to tell us what luck he'd had. Well, just as that came into my head, Winny said, 'That's Shorty, *I'm* sure!' and indeed, as the foot came nearer, I'd ha' known it for his too."

"Then you'd time to think all this before you saw who it was?" inquired Jane.

"It was but a minute," returned Mrs. Weston; "for it's not more than twenty paces, you know, from the garden-wicket to the door, and the step was pretty quick, but thought is quicker. Well, the words were only just out of Winny's mouth, when there he stood at the door!"

"Shorty?"

"Ay! Shorty, as plain as ever I see him in my life."

“ Did he speak ? ” inquired Jane, in a low tone.

“ No, replied Mrs. Weston. “ He stood there for, I dare say, the space of a minute, looking at us.”

“ And did you speak ? ” asked Jane.

“ *I* didn’t; but Winny just said the word *Shorty*, as soon as she saw him; and then something came over her, she says, that she couldn’t say any more.”

“ But how do you know it wasn’t Shorty, after all ? Perhaps it was a trick.”

“ No,” replied Mrs. Weston; “ it’s natural enough for a person that didn’t see him to think so—but it was no trick.”

“ Well, but what did he do next ? Did he go away ? ”

“ Why, he stood there, as I told you, for perhaps a minute—we two staring at him, not able to say a word—and then he came in....”

“ Came in ! ” exclaimed Jane, growing paler than before.

“ Ay, did he. He just stept in and walked across the room, close by where I was standing; and went in at that door,” said Mrs. Weston, pointing to the door of the bed-chamber.

“ Was that open too?” inquired Jane.

“ Yes, it was; we’d all the doors and windows open for the sake of the air.”

“ Well, and did you go after him?”

“ Winny did,” returned Mrs. Weston. “ I shall never forget the girl as long as I live!”

“ What did she do?” inquired Jane.

“ Why, as I said, as long as he stood at the door and was going across the room, we both stood like two of the stone figures on Sir Arthur’s tomb in the church, staring at him—and I dare say we was as white as they are; but when he went into the bed-room, Winny, without ever turning her eyes away, went after him—I’m sure she moved more like a ghost herself than a living being—but when she’d got into the room there was nobody there!”

“Perhaps he got out of the window!” said Jane.

“The Lord himself knows that!” answered Mrs. Weston; “but if he was flesh and blood, he couldn’t get out of the window—I’d defy any thing bigger than a child of five years old to get out of it—you know, it only opens one side. If it opened both sides, Shorty could never have got his shoulders through it.”

“But how did he look?” inquired Jane. “What was he dressed in?”

“Just as he was dressed when we saw him in the afternoon—in his stable-jacket and trousers.”

“And had he anything on his head?”

“No, his head was bare, and his hair looked very much ruffled like—and his face was very pale—and he held his left hand fast upon his throat, as a person might that had a pain there, and there was blood upon his clothes.”

“And what did *you* do?”

“Well, I stood still staring at the door he

had gone in at, till I heard a sound like somebody falling; and then I went in and found Winny lying on the floor, in a sort of faint. So I lifted her up and laid her on the bed, and sprinkled water on her face, till she heaved a sigh and opened her eyes."

"And what did she say?"

"She just said 'Mother, Shorty's dead!' and then she fell a-crying, and went into a sort of hysterics like."

"And you didn't see any thing again?"

"No," replied Mrs. Weston. "As soon as I could get poor Winny to herself, I lay down beside her on the bed; but we neither of us got a wink of sleep, as you may think: and as soon as it was dawn, she would get up and go away to the Huntsman, to look for Shorty; but she couldn't hear nothing of him, though she went all along the beach, as far as Long Point."

"I've heard of such things," said Jane.

"My first husband's mother, old Mrs. Methwin,

used to declare that when her son David was drowned at sea, she had been wakened out of her sleep by hearing the splash in the water, and a dreadful cry. She knew it was David's voice, and she woke her husband and told him what she'd heard; but he called her a fool and bade her go to sleep. But soon after there came a letter, telling how, that very night, David had fell off the mast and was drowned."

CHAPTER VI.

WINNY MAKES FURTHER INQUIRIES ABOUT SHORTY.

We have seen how, in spite of Winny's conviction of Shorty's death, hope, so slow to leave the human breast, had had power enough to drag her, not only to the inn on the heath, but mile after mile all the way to Long Point. She *knew* he was dead — but still she could not *believe* it. Everybody who has experienced any great and sudden misfortune, must have been conscious of this mental inconsistency. We each *know* that we shall die ; and yet, to most persons, how difficult it is to realize this conviction, and bring it home to themselves !—

As the following day was Sunday, it

was necessary that the ironing should be completed and the linen sent home, so that there was neither time for seeking Shorty nor for idle lamentations on account of his loss. Winny was too dutiful a daughter to leave her mother more than a fair share of the work ; so, heavy as her heart was, her fingers lost none of their activity, and the ironing and plaiting were as neatly done as usual. It was only just finished in time to be carried to the castle that night, and Winny found she must resign all hopes of making another visit to Lilly, which she had intended, if possible, to do before she slept. But with the earliest dawn of light she was on her way to the heath again. Her mother urged her to rest longer, representing that nobody would be yet stirring at the Huntsman ; but Winny said she might as well be walking, for she could not sleep.

The almost unacknowledged hope of finding Shorty at the stable urged her quickly

on ; whilst at one moment she condemned herself for indulging it, after what seemed so certain an indication that her lover no longer counted amongst the living ; and the next, endeavoured to persuade herself that the vision she and her mother had seen had been but a dream or a delusion. But it was in vain she questioned its reality ; she was too certain that they had been perfectly awake, and that, be the interpretation of the mystery what it might, they had on that occasion seen Shorty, either in the flesh or out of it ; and the difficulties of the former explanation seemed insuperable. There was no possible egress for him from the little bedchamber they had both distinctly seen him enter ; nor was there any possible place of concealment in it, which could have hid him from her eyes for an instant—there was neither closet, nor press, nor recess. Nothing but a small chest of drawers, two straw-bottomed chairs, a little rickety table, on which stood a cracked dress-

ing-glass ; and the bed, which, having neither curtains nor valance, was entirely exposed to view both above and beneath. Besides, poor Shorty was the last person in the world to have played such a trick, even had it been possible ; he had never made a joke, verbal or practical, in his life — nor ever understood one. Try to explain it away as she would, she was obliged to remain in the conviction that it was not Shorty alive, but the spiritual likeness of his corporeal frame that she had seen.

The door of the inn was not opened, nor the shutters unclosed, when she reached it ; indeed, it was not more than five o'clock, and too early for any of the inmates to have left their beds ; especially on a Sunday morning. So, Winny walked round to the stables—not with hope now ; for the result of her cogitations on the way had pretty nearly extinguished the last faint spark of that ; but surely there was somebody stirring in the

loft!—in the loft where Shorty used to sleep, too, for the window was open and she distinctly heard the movement of some one within! Could it be he? She stood still, with her eyes fixed on the window, afraid to go forward, lest she should extinguish the bright gleam that shot through her breast. There was certainly a man in the room, for once or twice she got an indistinct glimpse of him. Should she call? Should she knock? But what if, instead of Shorty, it proved to be one of his masters? That would not be pleasant; for, besides the confusion of being obliged to avow that she came to look for her lover, she stood in great awe of the whole Littenhaus family. Uncertain what to do, she stepped behind the shander-adan which was standing in the yard, and thence watched the window.

Exhausted by her want of sleep and anxiety, Winny was unconsciously supporting herself against the wheel, when she felt that

it was wet: and, on looking at the vehicle, she perceived that it bore evidence of having just come off a journey; it was splashed with mud; and, as there had been no rain within the last day or two, the mud must have come from a distance. Certainly, this was nothing to her; except that, if the carriage had been used, somebody must have driven it, and that person was doubtless the one then stirring in the loft. If it were Shorty, it might possibly account for his disappearance; and a ray of hope once more shot through her heart. But she was not left long in suspense; presently, the stable-door opened, and Luke came out. When she saw who it was, she would have given the world to be anywhere but where she was, she was so afraid Luke would see her and ask her what she was doing there. But he did not; he passed on towards the house; and she peeped round the corner just time enough to see him enter the door, and close it after him.

She then returned to the stable, and knocked as she used to do, when she desired to advertise her lover of her presence ; but there was no answer ; and, as she wished to see Lilly and was now pretty sure of not being observed, she seated herself in the rustic chair that stood before the house, resolved to wait till the little girl, who was always the first to rise, should open the door. But the morning sun shone fiercely down upon her head, and ere long the weary Winny fell asleep. She had enjoyed a good hour's forgetfulness of her woes, when she was awakened by Lilly's shaking her arm.

" Oh ! Lilly," said she, " how could I go to sleep here ? But I wanted to speak to you, and I sate down to wait till you were up. Have you seen Shorty ? "

" No," replied Lilly ; " he hasn't been here ! " .

" And you haven't heard anything about him ? "

“No,” returned Lilly. “I heard my cousin Ambrose say yesterday, that he had engaged another boy.”

“I wonder if they know anything of Shorty?” said Winny, somewhat abstractedly.

“Who?—Ambrose?” asked Lilly.

“Yes, and Mr. Luke!” replied Winny.

“Luke’s not at home,” answered Lilly. “He went away in the shander-a-dan on Friday night and hasn’t been back.”

“But he’s back now,” replied Winny; “and the shander-a-dan’s in the yard. I saw Mr. Luke go into the house before I went to sleep. And did Mr. Luke himself drive it?”

“Yes,” answered Lilly; “he always drives himself when he goes away at night.”

“I wonder if he saw Shorty on Friday night!” said Winny. “I wish you’d ask him.”

“I’ll ask Ambrose,” replied Lilly.

“I wish you would, Lilly,” returned

Winny ; “for I know very well something dreadful has happened to him ;” and, saying this, her tears began to flow afresh.

“Has there?” said Lilly, with some concern ; for she was not only sorry for Winny’s distress, but also for the ostler’s misfortune, whatever it might be ; for he had been civil and good-natured to her ; and had many a time lent her a helping hand with her work.

“Yes,” returned Winny ; “I know very well he’s dead ; but how it happened I can’t think, unless he was drowned, looking on the beach for Mr. Ryland’s body ; though how that should be, I can’t tell ; for he’d no need to go into the water.”

“Did he go to look for Mr. Ryland ?” said Lilly.

“Yes,” answered Winny ; “he used to go every night, and that was what got him into trouble with your cousins. You know there was one hundred pounds offered for him,” continued she, thinking, from the

manner in which the little girl looked at her, that she could not conceive the motive of the proceeding ; but Lilly looked at her still without speaking ; “and since he went away to the beach on Friday night, he’s never come back,” added Winny, with a fresh burst of tears.

“Perhaps he’s gone to Hotham?” said Lilly, repeating her former suggestion.

“No, he’s not !” answered Winny, mournfully shaking her head. “I know something bad has happened to him. Yesterday morning, I went all the way to Long Point to look for him, but I couldn’t see no signs of him, except it was some footsteps above high water, but I don’t know that they were his ; but you ask Mr. Luke if you saw him any where, will you ?”

“I’d rather ask Ambrose,” said Lilly, “and he’ll ask Luke. Here’s something you dropped,” added she, picking up the scrap of linen that Winny had found at the mill, and

which she had now drawn out of her pocket with her pocket-handkerchief; for, being Sunday, Winny had put on her church-going gown and doffed the apron, the corner of which usually served to wipe away her tears—a pocket-handkerchief was an article belonging to her Sunday attire.

“Oh! give it me,” said Winny, eagerly. “I found it at the mill yesterday morning, when I went to look for Shorty;—look, there’s a large spot of blood upon it—it’s a bit of a shirt.”

“But it’s not Shorty’s,” said Lilly. “He wore blue ones.”

“I know it isn’t his,” answered Winny; “but, somehow, I can’t help thinking that may be his blood!” and she looked at it, as if she thought, by her gaze, she could detect whether it were or not. “But I’m keeping you, Lilly; and I must go home to mother,” added she, as she thrust the bit of linen into her bosom, lest she should lose it by a similar

accident. "You be sure ask your cousins if they know anything of Shorty, and I'll come up to-morrow or next day and hear about what they say."

Winny went away, and Lilly turned to her daily labours, as usual; but, had she been capable of an act of introspection, she would have been aware that that morning was a very important one in her history. Her existence, till very lately, as we have said, had been merely that of an animal—nay, almost lower, for she had only lived her physical life without thought and without affections. The latter had never been awakened; and the former had been stifled and extinguished by her constant and monotonous labour, and the uniform hardness, coldness, indifference, and contempt which had blighted her. She had always been treated as a machine that was worked by the human voice, instead of by steam or the lever; and she naturally sunk to the level of a machine. The death of Jacob Lit-

tenhaus, and the kindness of Mrs. Ryland and her son, had first awakened her affections; and these, no doubt, prepared the way for a further development—a little more incitement, and she was set a-thinking, and this incitement was furnished by Winny's visit.

Of course, she had not forgotten, although she had never thought of, the events of the night preceding her illness. The scene she had witnessed when she went into her uncle's room, for the purpose of fetching some water to relieve her thirst, would have necessarily awakened considerable wonder, and not a little suspicion in most minds; but they had made small impression upon hers. It had never occurred to her at the time to inquire why one body had been removed from the coffin and another placed in it; nor had she any curiosity to learn whose remains they were that had been substituted for her uncle's. She was indeed too ignorant to wonder at the proceedings of her cousins and their com-

panions—such doings might have been quite unimportant and legitimate, for anything she knew to the contrary. Then, the arrival of Mrs. Ryland and Philip, and her own illness, had effaced the scene from her recollection ; and, although she had heard much discussion betwixt the mother and son, and even betwixt them and her cousins, as to what had become of the miller, it had never occurred to her to connect his disappearance with the events of that night.

But, somehow or other, Winny's account of the motive of Shorty's expeditions set the spark to a dormant train of thought in her brain. "Was it Mr. Ryland's body that she had seen laid in her uncle's coffin? It was certainly very like it—from her concealment behind the curtain, she had seen enough to be aware of that. It was wrapt in no grave clothes, but was dressed, like the miller, in a coat and trowsers of some light material. She remembered, too, that Luke had carried

a white hat in his hand, which had also been put into the coffin—and the miller had worn a white hat. But if it were really the miller's body, what could be the meaning of the transaction? If her cousins had found the old man dead, why did they not say so when there was so much inquiry about him? She could not imagine, and she felt that she should like to tell her dear Mrs. Ryland and Philip what she had seen, that, provided her suspicions were correct, they might be relieved from any further uncertainty.

These thoughts occupied her altogether, to the exclusion of Winny's distress and Shorty's disappearance, till her cousins were up and at breakfast; when she heard Luke ask Ambrose "if he had got that boy from the Lion," and the former answer, "that he was to be up on trial on Monday morning." No allusion, however, was made to his predecessor, nor had she an opportunity of fulfilling Winny's commission till late in the day, when, seeing

Ambrose standing at the door alone, she said—

“Winny Weston has been up, wanting me to ask you where Shorty is!”

“How should I know?” replied Ambrose. “Isn’t he at the village?”

“No,” returned Lilly, with perfect simplicity; “she says he’s dead!”

It was impossible for even Lilly, unobservant as she was, not to be aware of the alteration these few words produced on the countenance of Ambrose Littenhaus; whilst he stared at her with unmitigated surprise, the sudden paleness that overspread his features betrayed an emotion much more profound. Amazed and frightened at the effects of what appeared to her so simple a question, Lilly stared too; till, after the lapse of some moments, finding her cousin remained silent, and anxious herself to avoid the expression of his anger, which it appeared to her she had unwittingly incurred, she turned to go away.

But this movement seemed to arouse him from his abstraction ; for, the moment she stirred, he seized her by the shoulder and called Luke, who was smoking his pipe in the parlour near at hand.

“ What’s the matter ?” inquired the latter.

“ Ask Luke !” said Ambrose to Lilly, in a sharp, short tone.

“ Ask me what ?” said Luke, seeing that the girl hesitated ; for, besides being always afraid of Luke, she naturally shrunk from repeating an inquiry that had excited such a sensation.

“ Ask him what you asked me !” said Ambrose, fiercely.

“ Winny Weston wants to know what’s come of Shorty ?” said Lilly, with evident terror.

“ How should I know ?” said Luke, casting a look of displeasure at his brother.

“ Tell him the rest,” said Ambrose ; “ tell him what Winny told you !”

“Winny says Shorty’s dead,” said Lilly; so frightened that, being unable to raise her eyes to Luke’s face, she was fortunately unconscious of the expression that passed over it; whilst the silence that ensued left her in doubt as to what was to come next.

“Come here,” said he, after a pause; and, grasping her by the arm, he led her into the parlour and shut the door.

“When did you see Winny Weston?” was his first question.

“This morning,” answered Lilly.

“When?—at what o’clock?”

“When I opened the door, she was sitting there.”

“Sitting there! Then she was there before you were up?”

“Yes—she was asleep.”

“Asleep! How long had she been there?”

“I don’t know.”

“Had she seen anybody about since she came?”

Here Lilly hesitated, and looked more frightened than before. She perceived that she had asked a question that, for some reason or other, was offensive; and she felt, from the tone of Luke's inquiries, that Winny's having seen him would not mend the matter.

"Why don't you speak?" said Luke, angrily; "if you don't speak and tell the truth, I'll flog the skin off of you."

"She saw you," said Lilly, trembling.

"She did? And what does she come spying about the house for at five o'clock in the morning?"

"She came to look for Shorty, I believe," answered Lilly.

"What does she seek him here for, if he's dead? How does she know he's dead?" inquired Luke, savagely.

"I don't know," replied Lilly; but her downcast looks and indistinct utterance left great room for supposing that she did know.

“You lie!” exclaimed Luke, fiercely;
“you do know!”

“No, I don’t,” returned Lilly, but her terror deprived her of all firmness and appearance of veracity.

“What did she tell you?” said he; “tell me, or I’ll make you repent it!”

“She told me that Shorty was dead—that she knew he was—and that I was to ask you where he is.”

Luke was confounded. The manner in which Lilly stated the question was a direct implication that, the late ostler being dead, he, Luke, knew where the body was; this was the least that was implied—there might be much more. Pale and amazed, he stood with his eyes fastened on the child: whilst, with hers fixed on the ground, she trembled before him.

“Hark ye, Lilly!” said he, after a pause;
“if you don’t tell me everything that Winny Weston said to you, I’ll lock you up in the

cellar, and keep you on bread and water for a month."

But as, in fact, Lilly knew no more, no more could be extracted from her; and, after a prolonged scene of threats and interrogations, the matter ended for the present by Luke's locking her up in her own sleeping-room; where the poor child, to whom rest was always welcome, threw herself on the bed, and was soon wrapped in that blessed oblivion which enables old and young, and rich and poor, to live through their mortal woes.

CHAPTER VII.

LILLY GETS INTO TROUBLE, AND LUKE BECOMES MASTER
OF THE MILL.

The scenes betwixt Lilly and the young men, Luke and Ambrose, narrated in the last chapter, occurred whilst Charlotte and Anna were at church; they, therefore, were quite ignorant of the cause of the girl's incarceration. When they asked for her, on their return, Luke told them he had shut her up; and, as Luke was a person who never encouraged curiosity, even on the part of his own family, his sisters made no further inquiries; especially, as they saw a cloud upon his brow, which portended nothing very pleasant to any one who was imprudent enough to importune him.

Nobody ever questioned Luke—not even

Ambrose ; although he was so far concerned in his undertakings and linked to his fortunes, that he necessarily became a partner, though occasionally rather a passive than an active one, in all his proceedings.

As Lilly was still a prisoner, it fell to Anna's lot to rise and light the fire, and prepare the breakfast on Monday morning ; and when she opened the door, the first thing she saw was Winny Weston, seated there in the garden chair. It was lucky for Winny that Anna knew nothing of the offence she had committed the day before, or she would have met with a sharp rebuke ; as it was, she simply asked her what she was doing there.

" I only came up to ask for Shorty," said Winny.

" He's gone from here," replied Anna ;
" didn't you know that ?"

" Yes, ma'am," answered Winny ; " but Lilly Dawson said she'd ask Mr. Luke about him, for me."

“Ask Luke what about him?” inquired Anna.

“Where he is, ma’am,” replied Winny.

“How should we know where he is?” said Anna. “He has been away from here these three days. He’s gone to Hotham, to look for a place, most likely ;” and, shutting the door in order to put an end to the colloquy, she left Winny to go home as unsatisfied as she came.

In the mean time, the ostler’s disappearance began to be talked of amongst the villagers; and the gossip about him even reached the Castle. But poor Shorty was a person who belonged to nobody, except to Winny—he had no enemies, but he had no friends; and as he was not considered to have any abiding-place, his being missed from one spot only led to the conclusion that he had gone to another—it was not a circumstance calculated to raise any question or curiosity. Nobody but Winny and her mother, who were ac-

quainted with the amount of his attachment, and the humble hopes and plans founded on it, could estimate the improbability of his voluntarily absenting himself, or the significance of his disappearance from the neighbourhood of Combe Martin. To everybody else it seemed a very ordinary event, and it was certainly one which would have excited no notice at all but for the rumours which had got abroad about the apparition.

Jane Groby circulated the story; and, as the interest which had been excited by the miller's misfortunes was, by this time, pretty well exhausted, a new subject of conversation was not unwelcome, especially such a one as this; for, let people laugh as they will, there is a chord in almost every human breast, though pride seeks to conceal it, which is instantly stirred by the conception that the dead do sometimes, as Isaac Taylor suggests, "actually break through the boundaries that hem in the ethereal crowds; and so, as if b

trespass, may, in single instances, infringe upon the ground of common corporeal life."

The tale was variously received; the women generally believed it, and the men as generally laughed at it; some honestly, others to avoid being laughed at themselves. In the due course of circulation, the host of the "Lion" told Mr. Cobb, the agent, of it, and the agent told Lady Longford, who, from having heard of a similar circumstance in her own family, was not altogether disinclined to credit the testimony of the two women. Sir Lawrence, on the other hand, thought it quite absurd to give heed to them, and forbade her lending her countenance to so silly a rumour, by sending for them to the Castle, as she wished to do. "If you want to question them about it," said he, "take an opportunity of doing it some day, when you meet them accidentally."

Lady Longford took an early opportunity of meeting them accidentally, by calling at

the cottage, where she heard the whole particulars from Mrs. Weston and her daughter, as they had been related to Jane Groby. The tale was so simple and so direct, that the lady came away thoroughly satisfied that one of two things must be true; namely, that the women had, on that occasion, either seen the ostler himself or his apparition.

But when she declared this conviction on the same evening at dinner, she found Sir Lawrence perfectly impervious to the evidence she adduced—"he could but wonder how she could be so silly as to believe such a story." It was in vain that Lady Longford insisted on the known honesty and veracity of Deborah Weston, and the extreme candour of Winny, and that she put it to him, whether he would not believe them on any other subject that simply concerned the evidence of their senses. He could not deny that he would; but still he laughed. Then, she turned to the rector, Mr. Moore; but he

smiled, and said that the common people of all countries were apt to be believers in witchcraft and ghosts; but that an enlightened education was the remedy for such superstitions.

Lady Longford asked how we could be sure that the belief in such things was merely a superstition, and not founded on some ill-observed facts; whereupon, he told her, that the word superstition was derived from the Latin *superstitio*, and meant vain fears, &c., &c.

The agent, who was, of course, a lawyer, then remarked, that few people are capable of observing facts or giving evidence; an assertion which Lady Longford willingly admitted; maintaining, however, that the fact in question was of so simple a nature, that since both witnesses combined in affirming it, there was no alternative but to suppose that, if it were not true, they had agreed to assert a falsehood. The agent thought the last hypothesis would, in all probability, turn out to be the

real explanation of the mystery. The man had got into some scrape, and wished to stifle inquiry, by persuading the world he was dead ; so, he had either played them a trick, or they had mutually agreed to *désorienter* the public, by circulating this tale of a ghost ; after which he related the particulars of the Cock Lane ghost and some others, equally to the purpose. The doctor next took up the subject, and informed the company that ghost-seers were merely the victims of spectral illusions, a by no means uncommon disorder ; and, after a learned dissertation on hysteria and *delirium tremens*, he of course concluded by relating the case of Nicolai, the bookseller of Berlin.

As it did not, however, appear to Lady Longford that any of these objections or explanations met the point in question, with true feminine pertinacity she retained her own opinion still. Nevertheless, the ostler's fate was not investigated, because it was

nobody's business to trouble themselves about it, except the Westons, who had not the means. For the rest, it was only the women who avowed their belief that poor Shorty had come to an untimely end; and, of course, the more weight they attached to the evidence of the ghost, the more the men laughed at them. To institute any inquiry upon such grounds, was out of the question.

In the mean time, as Lilly's services could not be conveniently dispensed with, she had been released from her confinement, after receiving a severe reprimand from Luke, who threatened her with fearful consequences if she dared to repeat her offence. But, as poor Lilly did not clearly understand what her offence was, she was manifestly in considerable danger of incurring the menaced vengeance without knowing it; and so she felt—neither was it long before she found herself trespassing. One cause of her release had been, that it was washing-day; the lavatory pro-

cess being always performed conjointly by the two sisters, with such aid as Lilly was able to give them. They were all three thus engaged, when Carlotta Littenhaus, drawing a shirt out of the tub, said to her sister, "look here, at one of Luke's shirts! What a shame it is! One of the last new ones, too!"

"What is it?" inquired Anna.

"A great piece torn out of the bosom; see!"

"It must be joined," said Anna.

"Winny Weston's got the piece," said Lilly.

"Winny Weston!" echoed the sisters in a tone of surprise.

"Yes," said Lilly; "she found it up at the mill."

"How do you know?" inquired Charlotte.

"She told me so yesterday morning," returned Lilly.

"Told you so! Why, how came *you* to see Winny Weston yesterday morning?"

“ She came up here to look for Shorty,” answered Lilly.

“ And was it for speaking to her that you were shut up?” asked Anna, with evident interest.

“ Yes,” replied Lilly. Here the two sisters looked at each other, and Anna approached Charlotte, who was more narrowly examining the shirt.

“ See !” said the latter to her sister, as she pointed to some stains upon it.

“ And where is the piece?” asked Charlotte. “ Did she give it you?”

“ No,” replied Lilly ; “ she said she should keep it.”

“ Keep it,” said Anna ; and again the eyes of the sisters met ; and Lilly, now grown more observing, remarked that the countenances of both expressed considerable uneasiness.

“ But how do you know, Lilly,” said Anna, speaking with more gentleness than was

customary to her, "how do you know that it was a bit of Luke's shirt that Winny Weston found at the mill?"

"I know it was," said Lilly; "because, when I took up the shirt to put it in the tub, I saw it was just that piece that was out; and because there were some spots of blood upon it, and there was a spot of blood upon the bit Winny found."

"Luke cut himself when he was shaving, the other day," said Anna.

"Go, Lilly, into the garden, and cut some cabbages," said Charlotte, and Lilly went.

When she returned, she found the two sisters in close conversation, and the washing at a stand-still. However, they resumed their places at the tub, and no more was said about Winny Weston or the shirt, till Luke came in to dinner, when he was privately informed of what had passed; and Lilly, to her terror, found herself once more *tête-à-tête* with him in the parlour. He led her in and

locked the door ; and then, with the calmness that he felt necessary to his purpose, he interrogated her more particularly than he had hitherto done, about Winny's visits and communications ; gradually leading to the finding the piece of linen, and endeavouring to ascertain what Winny knew, or had said, with respect to it.

But it was not easy to come to any conclusion on this subject. Lilly's alarm and the fear of saying something that would cause offence, rendered her confused, and gave her the appearance of evasion ; so that the colloquy at length concluded, without affording him any satisfaction ; whilst it left Lilly a great deal more frightened than before ; so terrific were the denunciations he uttered against her, if she ever dared to interfere with his concerns, or speak to Winny Weston, or even pronounce his name.

Just when she was leaving the room, he called her back, and told her that the piece

of linen Winny had shown her did not belong to his shirt; and that if she ever dared to tell such a lie again, he'd make her repent of it. Lilly determined she never would; indeed, she had no desire or inducement to do it. Curiosity in her case was but feebly developed, still less that degree of reflection which gives birth to ready suspicion. All she sought was to escape punishment, and to avoid, if possible, this new class of offence into which she had so unwittingly fallen. Her life had been so entirely confined to this isolated family, of which she herself was an isolated member, that she was as ignorant of the world, either in its good or evil aspects, as if she had been brought up in a forest, and had been fed by a she-bear. Her food had been about as graciously given to her, and she had experienced about as much tenderness, as, under such an hypothesis, she might have expected: and if it had not been for the recollection of Mrs. Ryland and Philip, she

would scarcely have aspired to any more exalted happiness than such an education might have fitted her for ; but the ameliorating effects of their kindness, transient as it had been, were not yet effaced ; and although Lilly entertained no notion but of entire submission, and did not venture to hope for anything better than an exemption from punishment or extraordinary severities, she could never hear the word Hotham pronounced without a certain awakening of the heart, for there dwelt Philip and his mother. When her cousins, male or female, made an excursion there, it seemed to her that they must be very happy ; and if she ever did venture to do what youth is so prone to do, namely, to build a castle in the air, her little edifice was confined to the possibility of some future visit from these, her only friends.

The next bit of gossip that took possession of the village of Combe Martin, was concerning the rebuilding of the mill. Mr.

Cobb, as usual, told the news to Mr. Lacy, with whom he had a great habit of chatting as he passed through the village ; and Mr. Lacy, no less communicative, told it to his customers. Sir Lawrence had always entertained a friendly feeling to Matthew Ryland, who was indeed a very worthy, honest man. He had lamented his misfortune, and but for his disappearance would have rebuilt the mill for him. As it was, he had afforded some assistance to the widow, and had Philip been old enough, he would have placed him in his father's situation. But the boy was too young ; and the mother, whose health and spirits were sadly broken by her late misfortunes, felt unequal to undertake the management of the concern. Nevertheless, a mill was much needed ; there was none within a convenient distance ; and the neighbourhood felt the want of it. Sir Lawrence, therefore, sent a builder to survey the premises, and make an estimate of the costs of a re-erection.

No sooner had this news got abroad, than there were two candidates in the field, eager to be allowed to rent the new mill. One was George Taylor, the owner of the rival mill, which lay some miles on the other side of the village. Ryland's mill had done him great disservice, drawing off a great part of his business; and he was now desirous of either monopolizing both mills, or of exchanging the one he now occupied for the new one to be built. He offered a very sufficient rent, and was certainly not an undesirable tenant.

The other candidate was Luke Littenhaus, whose offers were equally liberal. The wishes of the people were in favour of Taylor, for Luke was no favourite with any body; and, as opinions in the nightly *sederunts* at the "Lion" ran very high on the subject, it was expected that this focus of public sentiment would not be without its influence, since, through the host and the agent, the channel was direct to Sir Lawrence Longford's ear.

Great was the disappointment, therefore, when it was understood that Luke was the successful candidate ! and till the cause of this arrangement was understood, and the terms of the agreement made known, the Baronet did not escape without animadversion.

“ Doubtless,” it was said, “ the Littenhaus people might give the highest rent, but that ought to be no object to a gentleman like Sir Lawrence ; and it was very shabby, for the sake of a few pounds a year, to prefer these new comers to such an old tenant as George Taylor.”

However, ere long, the truth came out, and fully justified the Baronet, since it appeared that the interest he took in the Rylands was the real cause of the disappointment. He wished to secure a future provision for Philip, by making an agreement with whoever rented the mill, that he should, in the first instance, take the boy as his apprentice, in order that he might thoroughly learn the business ; and

that, secondly, when Philip reached the age of twenty-one, the mill should be given up to him, if he liked to take it; so that, in point of fact, it was only to be let for a few years, and with the incumbrance of Philip on the premises; for an incumbrance both Taylor and Luke considered him. In consideration, however, of these disadvantages, the rent demanded was extremely moderate, and Sir Lawrence engaged to rebuild, and entirely fit up the mill at his own expence. Nevertheless, Taylor would not agree to the terms. He was not sure of being able to keep both mills at work successfully, and it would have been very imprudent to shut up his own, for the sake of so short a lease. Besides, he had a boy of his own, and would not be troubled with Philip.

Thus Luke got the mill, disliking the short lease quite as much as Taylor did, and the incumbrance much more. The difference between them was, that Taylor would have con-

sidered the terms of agreement binding, whilst Luke hoped to evade them. Besides, the importance of keeping the mill, either empty or in their own possession, was paramount to the interests of the whole Littenhaus family, and, indeed, to their safety too; so that, however disagreeable the conditions might be, there was no alternative but to accede to them.

The agreement signed, the building was straightway commenced, and in a moderate time finished, whereupon Luke made his *débüt* in the character of a miller; for it was, in reality, little more than a dramatic assumption of the part. In the first place, he knew nothing about the business; and, in the second, he did not want to know any thing about it. He had only taken the mill to keep any body else out of it; and the absence of his customers was to him more agreeable than their presence. And indeed he was troubled with few, for his disagreeable manners and ill-done work soon disgusted them;

and people preferred carrying their corn to George Taylor, though it was a good deal further, rather than submit to the rude indifference and carelessness of the new miller of Trentesy.

One consequence, however, arose from this arrangement, very important to Lilly, and that was the establishing of Philip Ryland as a member of the family. His mother brought him too, and staid a couple of days—interesting days to poor Lilly; for as mercy blesses the giver as well as the receiver, her own former kindness to the girl had made an interest for her in the good woman's heart; and Lilly's gratitude, humble and inexpressive as it was, was not lost upon her. When she went away, nothing would have pleased Lilly so much as an opportunity of being useful to Philip; but for this few occasions offered. He was kept at the mill all day; and in the evening, when he came home, after eating his supper, he was sent

to sleep in a room fitted up for him over the stable.

“ New brooms sweep clean,” says the adage. At first, though the life was a sadly dull and monotonous one—the more so, that there was so little to do—Philip had not much fairly to complain of; but, gradually, when every body had got used to the arrangement, and the eyes of the little public of the neighbourhood were no longer occupied in observing how it worked, the complexion of affairs began to change, but by slow degrees, so that for some time it would have been difficult to advance any palpable cause of dissatisfaction; nevertheless, the whole amount of annoyance together formed a large sum of discomfort. The boy was ill fed and ill lodged, and, though not overworked, he was constantly confined; no recreation of any sort was allowed him; and he was treated with as little respect and consideration as if he had been a dog; neither was it long ere this sort

of contemptuous neglect degenerated into extreme harshness, though this was never exhibited before a stranger.

Lilly, however, whose interest in Philip brightened her faculties and quickened her observation, saw it; but, except in one respect, she could do nothing to alleviate the annoyance. What she could she did; she had always had plenty to eat herself; but for this she never could have got through the work, and endured the fatigue she had done at so early an age. The truth was, there was no lack of good living in the house; economy or privation formed no part of the Littenhaus ethics—they seldom do amongst persons who prefer to subsist by irregular means, rather than by honest industry.

Previously to the affair of Winny Weston, she had always ate at the same table as the rest of the family; subsequently, that privilege was withdrawn, and she was made to take her dinner in the kitchen, after the rest

had finished theirs. She had formerly been looked upon as a creature without eyes, ears, or understanding—the tendency, and perhaps the purpose of her bringing up was to render her so; but by that offence she gained credit, not only for as much observation as she had, but for much more. She had become, in some degree, an object of suspicion, and was therefore kept more apart from the family. She gained one advantage, however, by her solitary repasts; namely, that she had it in her power to save some of her portion for Philip. She used to give it to him in the morning, when he went away to the mill, before any body else was up, and glad enough the hungry boy was to get it. This little kindness on her part also bred a confidence and intimacy betwixt them. Philip was very unhappy. Whilst his father lived, he had been accustomed to a cheerful, comfortable home; and, both before and since, he had always found himself the object of affection and ten-

der consideration. The change to him was a very sad one, and his situation was not improved by his having no one to speak his sorrows to, so that Lilly's sympathy was a real consolation; not only that material evidence of it which was demonstrated in the shape of cold meat and bread and butter, but the spiritual part also—it was a relief to be able to complain.

“ I wonder how *you* bear it, Lilly?” he said.

“ I've plenty to eat,” said Lilly.

“ Well, but you've no comfort of it; they treat you like a dog,” said Philip. “ It's not as hard to you as it is to me, though,” he continued, perceiving that Lilly did not exhibit the indignation he thought her entitled to feel, “ because you're used to it; but I'm not, and I don't like it; and my mother wouldn't like it, if she knew it.”

Then, as their acquaintance improved, he confided to her that, but from the fear of

grieving his mother, he would complain to her ; but he was conscious that the knowledge of his unhappiness would make her very miserable. Besides, he did not see how she could help him. Luke would not mind any thing she could say ; and it would not do to throw away the prospect held out to him at the end of the term for which the mill was let. “ No,” said he, “ I must bear it till I am twenty-one, and then I shall be master of the mill, and have a house for my mother ; and then, Lilly, you shall come and live with us.”

Lilly said she was afraid her cousins wouldn't let her ; but, nevertheless, the bare idea of such a beatitude gave her great pleasure.

In this way, time advanced till Lilly was near fifteen, and Philip a year older ; when a circumstance occurred that ultimately changed the current of her fortunes.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PAGE OUT OF LILLY'S EARLY BIOGRAPHY—SHE IS
REMOVED TO HOTHAM.

One day, Bob Groby, who since the disappearance of poor Winny's lover, had succeeded to his situation, having been sent to the village on a message, returned with the announcement that he was followed by two gentlemen, that were coming to lodge at the Huntsman. The strangers were at the Lion, when he passed, and Mr. Lacy had called him up, and bade him show them the way.

“There they be!” said the boy, “coming across the Heath, and the butcher's cart is to bring up their luggage in the evening.”

There was such scanty inducement of any kind to stay at the Huntsman, that the house

was singularly little troubled with customers, and it was a marvel to everybody how the Littenhaus people could make it answer. Indeed, to get rid of the difficulty, the little clique which constituted the public had been obliged to invent, or adopt, for the story was probably set afloat by the family themselves, a convenient fiction regarding some property on the other side of the channel, which helped to eke out their scanty profits. An oddish, foreign-looking man, who had been occasionally seen at the house, was said to be an uncle, and the master of a ship ; and also the agent through whom the funds came ; though some persons took it upon themselves to affirm that the money was his own, but that, being childless, he bestowed his superabundance on his nephews and nieces.

However this might be, the arrival of two such customers as now approached the Huntsman was a rare event. They were evidently gentlemen ; and, although in plain clothes, had

the appearance of officers, naval or military. Why they should wish to locate themselves at that solitary inn seemed, at first, an enigma; but when the butcher's cart arrived with the portmanteaus, the driver solved it in some degree by the information that he had "heard folks saying at the Lion, that they were officers come down to survey the coast."

The first effect of their arrival was the disappearance of the two young men, Ambrose and Luke. They at no time interfered with the management of the house, nor ever attended on the guests. These duties devolved wholly on the sisters and Lilly; so that strangers, who lodged there, seldom saw them. Now, however, they both decamped, taking up their abode at the mill, *pro tempore*; whilst the new lodgers quietly took their tea and retired early to bed.

On the following morning, they went out immediately after breakfast, and did not return till night. When they returned, they found

cards and an invitation from Sir Lawrence Longford to dine at the Castle on the third day, which they accepted. On the intervening one, they dined at home. Up to this time, in consideration of their rank, Anna and Charlotte had waited on them themselves, keeping poor Lilly, who, as we have said, was little better in appearance than a Cinderella, in the background ; but the necessity of providing a more than ordinarily good dinner on this occasion rendered it impossible to dispense altogether with her services ; whilst Charlotte officiated in the kitchen, and Anna in the dining-room, Lilly went backwards and forwards between them, carrying the plates and dishes.

“ Did you observe that girl ? ” said one of the gentlemen, whose carpet-bag and portmanteau bore plates inscribed with the name of *Captain Adams*.

“ No,” replied the other, whose name was Markham ; “ I did not look at her.”

“Do then,” said the first, “when she comes into the room again, and tell me if she’s like anybody you know?”

“Oh, certainly,” said the second, when Lilly returned; “I see what you mean. She’s the very picture of poor Nancy,” continued he, as Lilly left the room with a dish in her hand — “as far, at least, as such a creature as that can be like one so different. She has just the features and just the eyes and hair.”

“And something in the expression, too,” said Captain Adams, “in spite of her looking so stupid. What’s that girl’s name?” said he, turning to Anna, who stood behind his chair, listening to the conversation.

“Lilly Dawson, sir; she’s a cousin of ours,” answered Anna.

“If Cropley and my cousin got hold of her,” said Markham, laughing, “they’d produce her in court as the lost Isabel Adams, and claim the estate on the strength of the likeness.”

“ And call us as witnesses,” said Captain Adams.

“ And we certainly could not deny it,” returned Markham.

“ It’s an inexplicable thing to me, how your cousin can persevere in that suit !” said Captain Adams. “ He never can hope to gain it ; if any one passenger out of the Hastings had been saved, it must inevitably have been known.”

“ Of course ; he knows that very well ; but, in the mean time, as long as he can keep alive a doubt about the child’s death, he shuts your brother out of the estate ; and that’s all he wants.”

“ But the loss of character,” said Captain Adams. “ It’s so discreditable !”

“ Revenge is blind and deaf to all such considerations,” returned Markham. “ He never could forgive the marriage ; and I am sorry to say, that I do believe he was not sorry for poor Nancy’s death and the tragedy in

which the union terminated altogether; because it vindicated his prediction that they were to be miserable.”

“ Yes, only that their misery was of a very different kind to that he foretold. According to him, they were to be miserable together.”

“ They were but too happy together, poor souls !” said Markham with a sigh. “ If their over-anxiety had not induced them to send the child home in that unlucky ship, poor Nancy would probably have been alive now ; and their happy *ménage* contradicting his malignant prophecy—for, though he is my cousin, *malignant* I must call it.”

“ Malignant ! To be sure it was,” said Captain Adams ; “ odious. There never was a kinder heart in the world than my brother Charles has ; nor was there ever a man more devotedly attached to a woman than he was to your sister. I never could properly understand the source of General Markham’s hatred

— nor, indeed, how anybody could hate Charles.”

“ It was an old Eton friend,” said Markham ; “ but the cause always appeared to me so inadequate to so much enmity, that, upon my soul, I never had the patience to hear my brother John’s account of it !”

“ It’s a great pity, at all events !” returned Adams. “ And I fear my brother will be a good deal embarrassed to give Freddy an adequate education.”

“ We must try to get him into one of the Military Colleges, when he’s old enough,” replied Markham. “ But surely the suit can’t last much longer ?”

“ I don’t know ;” returned the other. “ Once in Chancery, the Devil may get it out again !”

Anna lingered at the sideboard till the conversation took another direction ; and then, quitting the room, she related to her sister what she had heard.

“Lilly must not go into the room again,” said Charlotte.

“Certainly not,” answered Anna; “and Luke must be told of this directly;” for Luke was the governing spirit of the family; his strong will and fearless temper gave him the mastery over all, who, from weakness or wickedness, had once joined in his schemes. As for Lilly, she was glad to escape waiting on what appeared to her such grand gentlemen, not to be perfectly obedient to the prohibition; so, unseen, she was soon forgotten by the strangers; whose short visit terminated without any other occurrence connected with the thread of our story.

As we have mentioned above, Lilly was now turned of fifteen years; she was small of her age and did not look more than thirteen, her growth being nipped by hard labour and insufficient rest. From the same cause, her cheeks were colourless and her eyes dull. The features, naturally regular and delicate,

had a pinched expression, and the language of the countenance altogether was that of a slave—a hopeless, unawakened spirit. She had always been treated as a chattel, and never had a will of her own on any subject whatever; nor was it thought necessary to consult her in an arrangement, which was now hastily formed, for disposing of her for life. She was to be married forthwith to Luke Littenhaus.

Now, marriage was a thing about which Lilly had the obscurest notions possible; so that being married or otherwise was a matter of indifference to her; but she both feared and disliked Luke, and she could not but entertain a horror of any event that seemed likely to bring her into closer relations with him. Her feelings towards the rest of the family were merely passive; but towards him both her natural instinct and his brutality to herself had inspired her with positive terror and aversion. However, her opinion on the subject was not asked; the thing was men-

tioned as a great honour and favour designed for her; and she was too feeble and subdued to give expression to her sentiments; and too ignorant to be aware that doing so could be of any avail. She wished Mrs. Ryland was there, that she might ask her about it; and she did communicate to Philip what awaited her; and Philip told her that if he were her, he would not marry Luke on any account; but Lilly did not know how to set about resisting.

“Run away!” said the boy; “I’d run away to-morrow if it wasn’t for my mother!”

And this advice of his was very honestly given. There was nothing in the world he wished so much as to run away from his apprenticeship; he thought of it day and night; and it was only his filial duty that withheld him from indulging his inclination. He had always had a great desire to go to sea, and that desire, daily augmented by the disagreeables of his situation, sometimes

almost amounted to a frenzy. The truth was, Luke earnestly wished, and pretty confidently expected, that he *would* run away ; and he did every thing he could, or, at least, every thing he dared, to goad him to it.

But Luke, who had never been conscious of any domestic affections himself, was unable to calculate the force of the resisting power ; and he accordingly found his project of less easy execution than he had expected. However, he succeeded so far as to inspire his victim with a restless anxiety to break his chains ; and as Philip was ever painting to himself the joys of liberty, he described them to Lilly in the same glowing colours ; but her conception of the elysium he drew was necessarily much less vivid than his own, her experience being more contracted and her imagination very unexcitable. Indeed, she was in her present state of feeling and intellect altogether incapable of forming such a project, so that, whilst he spoke, she only listened and

admired ; without any thought of applying the advice to herself.

As to will and to do were pretty generally simultaneous processes with Luke Littenhaus, it was settled that their marriage should take place immediately ; but, wishing to get the thing done as quietly as possible, and to avoid any observation and gossip that such an unexpected event might excite in the village, he thought it advisable to be married at Hotham. With this view, he engaged a lodging there, in order that the bans might be published ; and as Lilly had never been in possession of any decent attire whatever, she was sent there with Charlotte, for the purpose of fitting her out ; it no longer consisting with the family views to have her in the state of dirt and destitution in which she had hitherto lived.

If Lilly had ever had a wish in the world, it was to go to Hotham. The energy of this desire had somewhat abated since the translation of poor Philip ; still, his mother lived

there ; and Lilly thought that to go to Hotham was necessarily to see her ; so that on the morning they started in the shander-a-dan, she really felt an emotion very like pleasure. She had been rather better treated, too, since this new project was on foot ; and Lilly, whose mind was merely that of a child, easily forgot the past and the future, in the present.

Hotham was a large town, and the lodging she was taken to was in an obscure suburb of it. Lilly thought it very grand as they drove through the streets in the shander-a-dan, and was sorry when she found herself located in a back room, which only looked into a dull yard, that she could see nothing of what appeared to her such a gay and busy scene. As soon as they were settled, and Bob Groby dismissed with the vehicle, Charlotte went out, leaving her companion to amuse herself as she could. For the first afternoon, this did very well ; for Lilly, to whom sleep was al-

ways in arrears, found no difficulty in slumbering away the rest of the day.

But Charlotte had several acquaintance in Hotham. There was Mr. Fortune, the silk mercer; Mr. Bright, the spirit merchant; and Mr. Walker, the tobacconist; with all of whom the Littenhaus family carried on some secret mercantile transactions; and who, one and all, thought it to their own advantage to be civil to Charlotte; so that she received daily invitations to their houses. She also amused herself with improving her own wardrobe, whilst she refitted Lilly; but all this being done without Lilly's participation or assistance, the poor girl found her life at Hotham no better than it had been at the Huntsman—indeed, it was worse; as it is, in fact, less painful to have too much to do than to have nothing. Mrs. Hobbs, who kept the lodging, frequently sent her own child into the room to keep her company, as she called it; because she was

extremely glad to get her out of her own way; but the little girl was a noisy, riotous, troublesome creature, and nothing but the desperate solitude and want of occupation could have fortified the quiet Lilly to bear with her. Mrs. Hobbs recommended her to go out, and offered to send the child with her: but, as Charlotte had strictly forbidden Lilly to show her face outside the door, she answered that she “dare not—her cousin would be very angry;” an instance of tyranny that filled the breast of the liberal Mrs. Hobbs with considerable indignation. Lilly also wished, as earnestly as she could wish any thing, to see Mrs. Ryland; but even that was denied her. She knew that if she expressed such a wish, Charlotte would ask her “*what she could want with Mrs. Ryland?*”

Altogether, these preliminaries of marriage did not tend to raise Lilly’s ideas of the state itself. However, the preparations for the wedding, amounting, as far as she was

personally concerned, to a few new habiliments of an ordinary description, advanced daily ; and Luke Littenhaus and Lilian Dawson had been asked twice in church ; when there arrived a letter from Anna to say, that the two gentlemen had returned, accompanied by two others ; and that, as the cooking and attendance together exceeded her abilities, and her brothers did not choose to make their appearance, that Charlotte must return to officiate in the kitchen. This was Luke's desire ; and, as the ostler could not be spared to drive over for her, she was to make the journey the best way she could, and be at home early on the following morning. It was supposed the strangers would not stay more than a couple of days, and then the marriage could be proceeded with. In the mean time, Lilly was to be left at Hotham, under the care of Mrs. Hobbs ; as her appearance at the Huntsman was, for various reasons, at present not desirable.

CHAPTER IX.

LILLY MAKES A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

“I shall most likely be back to-morrow night,” said Charlotte, as she left the door ; “and remember, you are on no account to go out till I come.”

“What a shame !” cried Mrs. Hobbs. “Does she want to shut up the girl all the days of her life ? If I was she, I wouldn’t put up with it !”

But Lilly had not the slightest idea of rebelling, though she wished extremely to go out ; and the first day she stayed at home, in spite of all Mrs. Hobbs’s advice to the contrary. But the second found her weaker. It happened to be washing-day : little Sally was terribly in the way on these occasions, and

her mother wished nothing better than to get rid of her for the morning.

“Come! nonsense!—go along out and amuse yourself!” said she to Lilly. “Why shouldn’t you, I should like to know? Who has a right to prevent you?”

“My cousin will be angry,” objected Lilly.

“Angry!—Fiddlesticks! How should she know it? Besides, if she does, I’ll say I sent you.”

As Lilly’s obedience to her cousin’s precepts had hitherto been merely mechanical, it was not very difficult to change its direction, by the application of a new force. She had no arguments with which to rebut the advice of Mrs. Hobbs, and her inclination was all on the side of the seducer; so she put on her bonnet and started with the child for a walk.

Sarah Hobbs was just seven years old; a sharp, independent, forward creature, who knew her way very well about the greatest

part of the town ; being in the habit of roaming abroad whenever she could escape, unperceived, from the threshold ; sometimes, much to her overfond mother's alarm. She was extremely spoiled, and thoroughly ungovernable. Poor Lilly was no match for such a companion ; and, although she had been sent out in charge of the child, the latter very soon took command of the expedition ; dragging her on from street to street, and through one lane after another ; listening to no expostulations, and annoying Lilly exceedingly by not allowing her time to look in at the shop-windows. Still, she was amused ; and, if Sarah would have suffered her to lounge along as she liked, she would have enjoyed the novelty exceedingly. At length, the child fell in with some of her own acquaintance, and they formed a ring and began to play at " thread-my-needle " and games of the like sort ; and, as she was now as determined to stay where she was as she had before

been to go forward, Lilly, who had no alternative but to submit, amused herself with looking at the shops.

Presently, her attention was attracted by the sound of a horn, and the London mail dashed through the streets, dispersing the noisy children who were playing in the middle of it; who, together with Lilly and other idlers, collected about the inn-door, hard by, where it stopped, to observe the descent of the passengers, and the unloading of the luggage. When this little drama was concluded, Lilly looked about for Sarah, with the intention of inviting her to go home; but she could not see her; the child had moved off with one of her companions into another street.

Lilly felt a little uneasy, but she thought she would come back again; so she seated herself on a door-step to wait; but Sarah did not come, and, as time slipped on, she began to be very much alarmed; she was afraid to go

back to Mrs. Hobbs without the child ; besides, she did not know her way, nor even in which direction the house lay, so many turnings they had made since they left it ; neither was she acquainted with the name of the street. Added to this, she was getting very hungry, and, as she had no money, her only prospect of procuring anything to eat was by finding the lodging ; so, after much screwing of her courage, she entered a shop, and asked the people if they could tell her where Mrs. Hobbs lived. But they had never heard of such a person.

In another shop, she was told that there was a Mrs. Hobbs in West Street ; and she found West Street ; and even the house that had been indicated to her betwixt a butcher's shop and an ironmonger's ; but Mrs. Hobbs had removed thence, and nobody knew whither she was gone ; nor did it appear that any one else could give her the information she wanted.

Finding her inquiries vain, Lilly again sought the spot where she had last seen Sarah, hoping the child might yet return thither. She discovered this by means of the ostentatious crown and sceptre that hung over the door of the inn, and seated herself on the same step she had occupied before. But the afternoon passed and the evening drew on, and no Sarah appeared; then Lilly became dreadfully alarmed; so she rose once more with a desperate resolution to walk straight on for a considerable distance, in the direction she thought most likely to prove the right one: and, as she advanced, she began to have great hopes she was approaching the spot she sought; the streets and houses bearing a considerable resemblance to those which Mrs. Hobbs inhabited. She had, in fact, reached a suburb at the other extremity of the town. After wandering about and inquiring for Mrs. Hobbs for some time, till, betwixt hunger and fatigue, she was

quite exhausted, she seated herself once more on the only resting-place she could command, namely, a door-step, and began to cry. The people passed backwards and forwards before her, but her tears excited no attention; crying girls being no uncommon phenomena in the suburbs of any town; and Lilly's very youthful appearance rendering her sorrows little remarkable.

She had sat there about a quarter of an hour, when there came out of the door behind her a very humbly-dressed old man and a small, rough-looking red terrier. The dog seated himself on his hind-quarters, and the man leaned against the rail that divided that step from an adjoining area. Presently, he sighed heavily and muttered some words to himself. Lilly thought he spoke to her, and, looking up at him, she perceived he was blind; she perceived also that he had not addressed himself to her; but, probably from an instinctive feeling that this forlorn-looking

being might pity *her* forlornness, she ventured to ask him if he knew of a Mrs. Hobbs that lived thereabouts.

"No," replied he, "I'm a stranger here. You should ask at the shops."

"I have, sir," said Lilly, "but I can't find anybody to tell me the way."

"Why not!" said he; "do you know the street?"

"No, I don't know the name of it," returned Lilly. "I should know the house, I think, if I saw it."

"If that's all, you'd better go home and look for it to-morrow!" said the old man.

"I don't know where to go," said Lilly.

"How's that?" said he, becoming aware, by the tone of her voice, that she was weeping.

"I live at Mrs. Hobbs's, and I don't know anybody else in Hotham, except one person," she added, as she recollected Mrs. Ryland; "and I don't know where she lives, either."

“ Poor child !” said the man. “ Come along with me, and we’ll ask about it next door ;” and, with great patience, the old man accompanied her to several shops in the street, where she repeated her inquiry ; but it was to no purpose. Mrs. Hobbs in West Street seemed to have been heard of by various people ; but the fame of so obscure a person as Lilly’s Mrs. Hobbs, living in a second floor in a back street of a suburb, was not likely to have spread beyond her own immediate neighbourhood.

“ I’m afraid you won’t find your home to-night,” said the old man at length, as he turned his steps towards the door he had come out of. Lilly did not answer, but a convulsive sob conveyed the sense of her distress to his ears, though his eyes could not see it. “ Have you no place to go to ?” said he.

“ No, sir,” answered Lilly.

“ Come in here,” said he, “ and I’ll ask

the woman of the house if she'll lodge you for the night."

But the woman of the house, who was in a little shop close by the door, was not disposed to take in a stranger under such circumstances: the girl might be a thief; and she would have nothing to do with her.

"You may take her into your room, if you like, Mr. White; but you must be answerable for her."

The 'old man placed his hand upon her head, probably seeking to ascertain something about her age and height.

"Come along," said he, after a little reflection; "I won't turn a child like you into the street—some mischief may come of it. You may stay in my room, if you like, till to-morrow morning. That is, if you can't do anything better."

"Thank ye, sir," answered Lilly, glad enough of the offer, and exceedingly unwill-

ling to part with the only protector she seemed likely to get.

“Come along, then,” said he, feeling his way by the wainscoat of the passage.

“Is it up stairs, sir?” inquired she.

“Yes,” said he; “at the top of the house.”

Whereupon, Lilly spontaneously took hold of his hand, and led him in the direction he wished to go. When they reached the upper story, he pushed open a door to the right with his stick, and she found herself in a small chamber, containing a bed, a rickety table, and two wooden chairs.

“Now sit down,” said he, “and presently I’ll give you the rug off the bed; you’re young, and will be able to sleep upon the floor — children can sleep anywhere. I suppose you are a stranger in Hotham?” he added, after placing his stick in a corner, and seating himself upon the bed.

“Yes, sir,” answered Lilly; “I’ve only been here ten days.”

“I wonder you haven’t learnt to know the street you live in, in that time!” said he.

“I never heard the name of it,” returned Lilly.

“Can’t you read? The names of the streets are to be seen at the corners of them, generally.”

Lilly said she could read, but that she had not looked at the name of the street; which confession gradually led to further interrogations, till the old man found that till that morning she had had no opportunity of acquiring the knowledge, from the want of which she had suffered so much inconvenience.

“And have you no mother?” said he.

“No, sir.”

“Nor father?”

“No, sir.”

“And you’ve always lived with your cousins?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And are your cousins good to you?”

Here Lilly hesitated : she was not capable of estimating the amount of ill-treatment that had been inflicted on her from over-work and the slavery to which she had been submitted ; yet she felt that she could not say her cousins were good to her.

“And what did you come to Hotham for?” said he.

“To be married to cousin Luke,” returned Lilly.

“To be married !” reiterated the old man, in amazement. “Why, how old are you?”

“Fifteen and a half, sir.”

“Fifteen ! I thought you were a child ; but that’s very young to be married. And do you like being married?”

“No, sir.”

“You don’t ! Don’t you love this cousin Luke?”

“No, sir.”

“You don’t love him?”

“No, sir; I don’t like him at all.”

“Then what do you marry him for?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

“That’s very extraordinary,” said the old man. “Are they making you marry him against your will?”

“Cousin Charlotte said I was to come to Hotham to marry cousin Luke.”

“Do you know what being married is, child? I don’t think you do,” added he, observing that Lilly made no answer. “You can’t be married against your will, you know. Have you nobody to stand up and speak for you?”

“No, sir.”

“Have you no friends that you remember, besides these cousins?”

“No—I don’t think I have,” said Lilly, with some hesitation. “There was uncle Jacob—but he’s dead; and grandpapa—”

“And is he dead, too?” inquired Abel White.

“He was drowned in the ship,” said Lilly.

“Cousins told me so.”

“What ship?”

“The ship we came over in.”

“Where did you come from?”

“I don’t know, sir. I was a very little girl.”

“And were your mother and father drowned too?”

“No, sir; they stayed behind, I believe; I don’t remember about them.”

“And you’ve lived ever since with these cousins?”

“Yes, sir.”

All this seemed natural enough, except the marriage; but why this cousin Luke should be going to marry this ignorant, simple child, who, from what he extracted from her, had evidently only been treated as a servant in the family, he could not conceive; and the conclusion he came to was, that there was probably no marriage intended, but that

cousin Luke was a libertine, who designed to take advantage of the girl's innocence and ignorance. He felt very sorry for her; but what could he do to help her? A desolate, sightless beggar! He could give her nothing but advice, and that it was quite clear she was incapable of following.

The interest of the conversation had so beguiled the time, that it was far beyond the old man's usual hour of rest, or Lilly's either, before the rug was stretched upon the floor for her night's repose. He threw himself upon the bed, with his dog beside him; and she, in spite of her hunger, her sorrows, and her hard couch, had no sooner lain down, than she was fast asleep.

When she opened her eyes in the morning, her protector was already up and seated on the side of the bed, eating a piece of bread, and supping some weak coffee out of a tin mug.

"Sleep is so sweet to the young," said he,

“I did not like to wake you; but now we must be stirring; for Pipes and I must set out upon our tramp again. I should think you'll be able to find your home, now that you have the whole day before you.”

Lilly rose from the floor, and stood looking at him, but made no answer.

“If I had my eyesight,” he said, “beggar as I am, I'd try to help you; for I'm afraid you've nobody to save you from this man that you say you're to marry! but—” and he sighed heavily — “I can't help myself now. But listen, child: try and find somebody to protect you; and if the worst come to the worst, tell the minister, when he's going to marry you, that you have not given your consent—do you hear?”

“Yes, sir.”

“You could do that, couldn't you?”

“No,” said Lilly; “Luke would be so angry!”

“Then you are very much afraid of him?”

“Yes ; Luke’s very angry often.”

Abel White sighed again.

“Well,” said he, “God help the helpless ! Come, Pipes,” he added, rising from the bed, “we must be off. Here’s a drop of water for you, before we go,” and he felt for a brown jug that stood on the floor, but it was empty. “They haven’t filled it,” said he ; “so you must go without, my dog.”

“I’ll fetch some water,” said Lilly, with alacrity ; and she quickly ran down stairs with the jug and was up again in three minutes.

“Light of foot, light of foot,” said he, “poor child ! but not light of heart, I fear. Come now, then, let us go down stairs :” and silently Lilly followed him.

When he had reached the bottom, he went into the little shop and paid for his lodging.

“Sorry to see you on the tramp alone, Mr. White,” said the woman.

Abel sighed and folded in his lips, as if to shut in the lament that hovered on them, and which he felt it was vain to waste on this hard sympathy.

"Times is bad, too, for all trades, and yourn's no better than the rest, I doubt."

"I've no trade now," said Abel; "I beg;" and though his voice shook when he made the avowal, it was with other recollections, not with shame; for hard necessity forced him to beg. And though he might sigh at his degradation, he had no cause to blush for it.

"And how do you get along?" asked the woman. "Don't you find it hard?"

"Hard enough," said he; "I've only my dog and my stick."

"You should try to get some child to lead you," said the woman. "Mrs. Mackenzie let out her boy Tommy to a blind man, and he paid her threepence a day for the use of him; but to be sure the child came home half

starved. I think, for my part, it stopped his growth, for he has never grown since."

"I shouldn't like to be responsible for another person's child," said Abel; and wishing the woman "Good day," he came out to where Lilly was standing within hearing of this conversation.

"Little girl," said he.

"Yes, sir," said Lilly.

"Good by to you now, and try and find your home; ask at all the bakers' and butchers' shops, and don't marry that man; he'll ill-treat you, child." And then, with the string that was attached to Pipes in one hand, and his stick in the other, he stepped into the street and wandered on, saying ever and anon, in a melancholy voice, "Remember the poor blind."

For a minute, Lilly stood upon the step looking after him, and then she too quitted the door; and partly because all ways were alike to her, who did not know which was the

right one, and partly from an unwillingness to lose sight of the old man, she turned in the same direction he had done, slowly following his footsteps through the street.

As she went along, many thoughts and feelings awakened by her distress of yesterday and the conversation with Abel White were floating through her brain. Recollections of "grandpapa," and some faint, faint reminiscences of a former state, of something anterior to her residence with her cousins, and different to it, like those evanescent gleams of unknown scenes and persons, which make us fancy we have lived before — recollections which were nearly effaced from her dulled brain ; but which, under these quickening influences, shaped themselves again to memory, as the invisible inscription on a sympathetic tablet is revived by the appropriate re-agent.

Then the interrogations of the old man, and the observations he made upon her

answers, suggested to her more vividly the idea that she was ill-treated and oppressed; and that it was not necessary for her to marry Luke, when she did not like it. But, at the same time, whilst she awoke to the obscure consciousness of her being an individual who had some rights and claims of her own, and who ought not, therefore, to be the mere slave and tool of others, she felt an entire conviction of her own incapacity to resist. To say *no* to any of her cousins was a thing that had never entered her mind. To say *no* to Luke was utterly impossible—she felt as if his eyes would strike her dead, if he could only read her thought.

Then, how was she to go home and meet Charlotte, after the extraordinary disobedience she had been persuaded to commit, and the dreadful aggravation of staying out all night? She did not doubt but her cousin had returned, as she had said she would, on the preceding evening, and how angry she must

be ! And who could tell but that Luke might be with her ! How could she face them ? She actually turned pale at the mere idea of it, and trembled as she walked through the streets, lest she should run against one or the other of her tyrants.

Meanwhile, the old man groped his way on, sometimes stopping to ask a question, or to receive charity, till Lilly saw that they were approaching the extremity of the town. The houses began to be farther apart, the way was unpaved, and green fields shone before her in the sun's light. She was certainly, therefore, not going in the right direction to find her cousins ; and yet, though conscious that she was doing that which rendered her offence still more unpardonable, she felt cheered and relieved by the prospect before her ; and with every step she took, her disinclination to return augmented. So she continued to follow the old man, with the instinctive feeling of a dog, till they had got a

good way from the town, and he sat down on a bank, by the roadside, to take a rest. Lilly sat down, too, at some distance. Not that she felt tired, or even hungry; for, although she had had nothing since the previous day's breakfast, she was not conscious of any appetite, and when Abel patted his dog and gave him a bit of crust from his pocket, she felt no desire to partake of it. She was in fact wholly engrossed with her anxiety not to lose sight of the old man, and by her momentarily increasing terror at the thoughts of going back to encounter her cousin's wrath. When Abel had rested a bit, he arose and continued his journey, and Lilly crept on after him.

It was now, for the first time, that the blind man became aware that he was followed. He had doubtless before heard the light footsteps behind him, but without being awakened to any curiosity with respect to the passenger, who might chance to be going the same way

as himself. But the cessation of the sound when he sat down, and its renewal when he resumed his journey, naturally attracted his attention. So he stopped, and, turning half round, leaning on his stick, with his sightless eyes in the direction of the footsteps, waited for the traveller to come up. But when he stopped, the sound ceased, for Lilly stopped too. Could his ears have deceived him? Could it be the echo of his own footsteps? Surely it must be; so he went on again; and as soon as he moved, the sound recurred. But his attention being now fixed on it, he felt quite satisfied that it proceeded from other feet than his own. So he stopped and waited again, but with exactly the same result; and, although he spoke, and asked "Who's there?" there was no answer. After trying the experiment several times, he came to the conclusion that he was followed by some animal, whose attachment to humanity, or a necessity of one kind or other, was urging it to keep near him. So he held on

his way, though not without curiosity with respect to his silent companion.

The day was bright and fine, the birds were singing in the hedges, and, as they were advancing inland, the country was getting more beautiful every mile they trod. Lilly felt that if she could only have walked with the old man instead of behind him, she should have liked the journey very much—far, far better than toiling in the kitchen at home. The further she went, the less disposed she felt to return. About mid-day they came in sight of a village; and, as they entered it, the voices of the children playing in the road seemed to advertise Abel of the point he had reached. He kept his way on the right side of the little street, till about the middle of it, when Pipes seemed disposed to turn off at a right angle. Abel then struck his stick against a signpost that stood before a very humble place of entertainment; and, finding the dog was right, he followed him into the house.

CHAPTER X.

LILLY CONTINUES HER JOURNEY.

“It’s old Daddy White, mother!” said a child, who had been standing at the door.

“Ah, Mr. White!” said the woman; “come in. I didn’t expect to see you this way so soon. Why, it bean’t your time for being this way yet, sure! Eh?” added she, as she looked in his face, “what’s this has happened? Where’s your girl?”

“Gone, Mrs. Martin,” said the old man, in a tone of hopeless resignation. “Poor little Matty’s under the sod; she lies in Frampton churchyard; and I gave her a decent burial—poor as I am.”

“Matty dead!” exclaimed the woman.

“Lord! Mr. White, do sit down! Well, to be sure! Who’d ha’ thought it! but, as my good man used to say, we’re here to-day and gone to-morrow!”

Abel dropped into the seat the woman placed for him, and again there was the folding of the lips, the shutting in the lamentations that would under such circumstances have profaned the memory of her he mourned—they could not understand *his* grief!

“Well, Mr. White, and now you’ll take something, I’m sure, after your walk. What shall it be! Ah, poor little Matty! It was always a bit of bread with her. I don’t know as ever I see that child eat anything but a crust. ’Twas ‘A bit of bread, please, ma’am,’ whenever one asked her.”

“She ate bread, that I might eat meat,” said Abel, in a low tone.

“Ay, I believe she did,” said Mrs. Martin. “Many a time I said to our Betsy, says I, ‘I do believe that child denies herself, for sake

of her grandfather.' 'Yes,' says Betsy, 'she's just the most patientest little creatur as ever I see.' "

Abel's lip quivered, and the corners of his mouth were convulsed ; but he could not trust his voice to speak.

"We've got a nice bit of cold bacon, and the beer's quite fresh, if you'd like a draught," said Mrs. Martin.

"I'll take a pint, if you please," said Abel.

"And a mouthful of the bacon too, won't you? Come, come, you must. What's the use of grieving?" for the flash of recollections that had overwhelmed poor Abel, on reaching a spot where he had last been with his beloved one, had made him feel unable to eat; and the woman saw what had taken away his appetite.

However, she placed the bacon and beer on a small table, and having cut him a slice or two with some bread, she laid them together and handed him the food.

“I see you’ve got your dog yet,” said Mrs. Martin, throwing Pipes a bit of the rind, and wishing to facilitate poor Abel’s slow mastication by saying something consoling.

Abel patted the dog which sat at his feet.

“By the by,” said he, “some animal, I believe, has been following me all along the road; unless it’s some poor deaf and dumb creature; for I could get no answer when I spoke to it; but I heard its foot behind me all the way from Hotham, as far as your door, I believe, or nearly.”

“Look out,” said Mrs. Martin, to her little boy, who was standing at her elbow; “see if there’s anything there.”

“No,” answered the child; “there’s nothing but Bop, lying next door.”

“That’s our neighbour’s dog,” said Mrs. Martin, going to the threshold to take a peep out herself.

Meanwhile, Lilly was sitting on a stone, on the opposite side of the way, uncertain what

to do, and whether to go back or forward ; for though the idea of the former became every moment more dreadful to her, yet the apprehension of the old man's displeasure, when he discovered that she had followed him, alarmed her very much, also. So, without being able to determine what she should do, she sat watching the door ; for, observing that the house was an inn, she thought he would probably come out ere long and continue his journey ; in which conjecture she was not mistaken. After a couple of hours' rest, she saw him standing on the threshold, in conversation with the woman and the child, whose head he patted, as he bade them good by, and continued his way. Lilly waited till he had gone forward about a hundred yards, and then, without questioning with herself any further, she obeyed her instinct, arose, and followed him.

As there were several persons moving to and fro in the village, till they had got beyond

it, the sound of her footstep was not observable; and even when they reached the highway, she kept further in the rear than she had done before, warned by the old man's repeated endeavours to discover who was behind him. However, on a road where they were only now and then passed by a carriage or a passenger, it was not long before the footstep became audible to Abel's excited ears. For there was a growing mystery and a strange interest beginning to creep about him with regard to this unseen companion. What light foot could it be, that had tracked him thus all day?

Without holding any fixed belief on the subject, Abel White had never wholly rejected the beautiful faith that those who are gone before may be the guardian angels of the loved ones left behind; and now he could not dismiss from his mind an idea that this might be his lost Matty, still watching with tender care over her poor old grandfather.

How he wished, if it were so indeed, that she would enter into more free communion with him ! and ever and anon he paused and looked back, and even ventured to murmur her dear name ; but there was no answer, and when he stopped, the sound ceased.

“ She will not be questioned,” thought he ; so he resolved to make no more efforts, lest by too much boldness he should banish his protecting spirit. So on he walked, with Lilly behind him, for a couple of hours more, when he again sat down by the wayside, to rest. All this while, Lilly had had no refreshment ; nothing but a drink of water now and then from the clear springs they passed had entered her lips ; and hitherto, her anxiety and fear had kept off her appetite ; but now, in spite of these, the fine air and constant exercise began to have their influence, and Lilly felt hungry. How she was to get anything to eat she could not imagine : she had no money ; indeed, she had never had a

halfpenny in her life. She was getting tired too; and what was to be the end of it? The evening was approaching; the old man would rest somewhere, but where was she to rest? She had no prospect of getting a bed: and, bad as Lilly's fate had hitherto been, to starve in the street would be far from an agreeable termination to her woes.

The sense of her desolation came over her; the tears rolled down her cheeks; and whilst she wept within a few yards of him, the thoughts of the blind man were divided betwixt his Matty's spirit, which he believed was hovering near him, and the unfortunate little girl whom he had sheltered on the preceding evening. He wondered if she had found her home, and sighed over the melancholy fate that seemed to await her when she was married to "Cousin Luke."

Whilst he and his unseen companion were thus employed, the wheels of a carriage were heard approaching with great rapidity, and

Abel had scarcely made his usual appeal of "Remember the poor blind," when a voice from the vehicle cried "Here!" and hastily threw into the road some pence which had been received at the last toll. Poor Abel's apprenticeship to the art of taking care of himself was yet but of late date; he had before had his Matty's eyes to rely on; and, although he had been long blind, he had not yet fully acquired that other sense which sometimes seems to serve the sightless almost as well as eyes. Thus, on the present occasion, in his attempt to catch the money, he rose so hastily that he almost fell forwards. He escaped this calamity; but, in the struggle, he not only dropped his stick, but Pipes got his foot crushed by the wheel of the gig. A loud cry from the poor animal advertised Abel of this misfortune—a grievous one to him, both as regarded his own convenience and his sympathy for the dog; and in great distress he sat down again, taking Pipes in his lap,

and trying to ascertain, by feeling, the amount of the injury; whilst the dog expressed at once his pain and his gratitude by whining and licking his master's hand.

“Oh, Pipes! Pipes!” exclaimed the old man, “what is to become of us now?”

What, indeed! How could he go forward, without his dog to lead him? or how should he, who could not take care of himself, carry the lame animal? Poor Abel's case was bad enough before: but it was desperate now; and, absorbed in the contemplation of his distress, he forgot even the guardian angel that he had almost persuaded himself was watching over him. But Abel did not know the worst yet. Lilly, who had involuntarily drawn near when the accident happened, suddenly saw him stretch out his arms and feel about, before, behind, and on each side of him. He had just recollected his stick—where was it? It had rolled away into a ditch. Abel laid down the dog and rose.

“Oh, Pipes, Pipes!” cried he, “this is worse than all!”

At that moment, the stick was silently placed in his hand. It would have been strange to have beheld the countenance of the old man as he received it—the flush that overspread his pale face—the glow of sublime joy that illuminated his countenance.

“Matty!” murmured he, very low.

Lilly durst not speak.

“Lord, forgive me!” said he, in a tone of great reverence, joining his hands, and turning up his sightless orbs to Heaven. “Lord, forgive me that I feared! Come, Pipes,” he added, stooping to lift the dog. “Come, let us go on! The Lord himself will guide us!” and, with Pipes in his arms, he attempted to move forward. But, however great his faith and his will, it was a difficult matter to guide himself without the dog. He veered from side to side, and, the sense of insecurity rendering his step uncertain, he stumbled fre-

quently. Then, not having a hand at liberty, he repeatedly knocked his head against the branches of the trees that overhung the road; to avoid which, he stepped off the path and walked in the middle of the way, at the risk of encountering some careless horseman or driver.

The poor old man tried to keep up his spirits amongst all these difficulties; for, after so signal an instance of the favour of Providence, he thought it a sin to doubt; but the perspiration stood upon his forehead, and the hand that held the stick shook with nervous anxiety. And the difficulty of walking was not all. How was he to ascertain when he had reached the little inn where he intended to pass the night? He had travelled the country for four years, with his grandchild and Pipes; and the dog, who was well acquainted with all the houses he stopped at, regularly led his master to the doors; but now there was great danger that Abel might

miss his night's lodging. In spite of his faith and his gratitude, poor human nature quailed ; the helpless wanderer became every moment more confused and tremulous ; and when, at this crisis, he was suddenly startled by the sound of four galloping horses and the rattling wheels of a stage-coach, and was advertised, by the loud cry of "Hoigh ! hoigh !" that he was in danger, he could only stand still in his amazement, and leave them to run over him if they liked.

"Hoigh ! Hoigh !" cried the coachman, again ; and the scream of a female voice which proceeded from the roof warned him of the imminence of his peril ; but, just at the critical juncture, a little hand was placed within his, and he was drawn aside.

The coach passed on ; and Abel, overcome with wonder and gratitude, fell upon his knees, crying, "Lord, what am I, that thou shouldst care for me !"

CHAPTER XI.

LILLY'S FORTUNES SHOW SYMPTOMS OF IMPROVEMENT.

Abel rose from his knees, brushed the dust from them, again took Pipes in his arms, and, with a reverent heart, was just about to step forward, when the same little hand was thrust into his, and a timid voice whispered, "Let me lead you."

Abel's first, momentary idea was, that it was the voice of an angel, but the delusion was as quickly dispersed—the hand that held his was assuredly of flesh and blood.

"Who are you?" said he.

"Lilly Dawson, that slept in your room last night," replied she.

"But how came you here?" asked he, now completely recognising her voice.

Lilly hesitated, afraid to confess the truth, lest he should be displeased.

“ Is it you that have been following me all along the road ?” said he.

“ Yes,” answered she.

“ Then it was you that gave me my stick, and saved me from the coach ?”

“ Yes,” said Lilly.

“ But why didn’t you answer, when I spoke ?” he inquired.

“ I was afraid you’d be angry, and send me back,” answered Lilly, gathering courage, as she perceived no symptoms of displeasure.

“ Lord, thy ways are wonderful !” exclaimed Abel, almost as much amazed at this *dénouement*, and as much disposed to believe it a direct interference of Providence, as when he imagined himself protected by the spirit of his grandchild.

“ But why have you come so far, child ?” said he. “ What is to become of you in this strange place ; and how are you to find your way home again ?”

Lilly hung down her head, and was silent ;

she scarcely knew herself why she had come so far; and she was afraid to avow that she did not wish to go home again.

“Is it because you wish to avoid marrying your cousin?” said Abel.

“Yes,” answered Lilly.

“But how can I keep you?” said he; “I have no home to give you, my child; I’m but a beggar myself—a beggar and a wanderer on the earth.”

“I could lead you,” said Lilly, wishing to induce him to let her stay, by suggesting the service she might do him.

“But you wouldn’t like to wander about the country with a blind beggar?” said Abel.

“I should like to keep with you,” answered she.

“But what will your cousins say when they miss you?”

“I hope they won’t find me,” said Lilly; and Abel felt that the little hand which he still held trembled with terror at the idea he had raised.

“ Then you don’t wish to return to them ? ”

“ No,” answered she.

“ What, never ! Have you no love for them ? ”

“ No, none,” she answered, speaking with more decision than before.

“ And you really wish to stay with me ? ”

“ Yes,” said she.

“ Then God’s will be done ! ” said Abel ; “ for I believe it is he that has put it into your heart to do this. If you had a father or mother, I should think it my duty to take you back again ; but, since nobody seems to have any claims on you but these cousins, and they, I’m afraid, have done *their* duty badly by you, I don’t think it’s mine to reject the blessing the Lord has sent me ; so, come along.”

Abel was naturally very anxious to learn as much of his new companion as he could extract from her. He first asked her about her adventures of the day ; what had put it into

her head to follow him, instead of trying to find her home ; and how she had sped during the journey. Lilly could not tell herself why she had followed him ; for it was instinct rather than design that had guided her footsteps—one reason, however, she could assign ; and that was, that she preferred to go any way rather than to meet her cousin Charlotte, who she expected would be at the lodging before she could get there. As for the journey, Lilly said she had got on very well, except that she was rather tired and hungry. Abel was quite shocked when he learnt that she had been fasting so long, and immediately insisted upon her sitting down and relieving the exigencies of her appetite by a bit of bread, some of which he always carried in his pocket for the use of himself and Pipes.

Lilly enjoyed the bread very much, especially now that her heart was lightened of its great care. “I haven’t been hungry long,”

said she, "because I was so frightened, for fear you'd send me back again."

When she had rested and refreshed herself, Abel proposed continuing their walk; "for we have not much farther to go to-night," said he; "and then you shall have some supper and a good night's rest. She's a decent woman at the house we're going to, and she'll be good to you—she was always good to Matty."

Lilly wondered who Matty was, and where she was; and could not help feeling half afraid that she would come and supersede her; for, now that she had hold of the old man's arm, and that, so far from being angry, she found that he was extremely glad of her company and assistance, she felt a fulness of content that she had never known before; and, forgetful of her previous fatigue and exhaustion, she trudged on with a step as light as her heart.

There was something in Abel's countenance

and manner, too, that loosed her tongue and inspired her with an ease and confidence quite unusual to her. He did not treat her with contempt, nor call her a “stupid fool,” as her cousins were wont to do. On the contrary, he spoke to her with gentleness, and questioned her about her past life, as if he supposed he was addressing a rational being, whilst his thin pale features, and the gray hair that floated over his shoulders, inspired her at once with pity and reverence. Here was no chilling fear to freeze up her young heart ; Abel was as helpless as she was ; and she had seen how much he needed her services ; so that their relation at once assumed the character of mutual dependance.

As for the old man, the more he questioned her, the more he felt that he was doing her no wrong in permitting her to follow her inclinations, or in accepting services so needful to himself, in exchange for the little protection he could afford her. Hardship and

poverty certainly awaited her in the line of life she was choosing to embark in; perhaps want; but he had no assurance that the marriage with her cousin was to exempt her from these evils; whilst he was quite certain that it would entail others quite as bad. Added to which, unable to divine any motive for Luke's wishing to marry this destitute oppressed child, he very much doubted the honesty of his intentions with respect to her. In short, the advantages both he and Lilly derived, and the evils they both escaped by their junction, were so manifest, that he could not help believing that it was the providence of God that had brought them together, to help each other; and he felt scarcely less fortified and exalted by this evidence of heavenly superintendence, than he would have done, had his first notion been confirmed, and the spirit of Matty proved to be the ministering angel sent to watch over him.

“ Let me carry Pipes a bit now,” said she, after they had proceeded about half a mile.

“ You’re not afraid of him,” said Abel.

“ Oh no,” answered Lilly ; “ I love dogs. We’d a great big dog at the Huntsman ; he was always chained up, for he was very savage, and nobody durst go near him.”

“ Who wouldn’t be savage that was always chained up ?” said Abel. “ Most frequently man himself makes the cruelty he suffers by.”

“ I dare say it was being tied up that made Nero savage,” said Lilly ; “ for he wasn’t savage when he was young.”

“ Some animals are naturally malicious,” said Abel ; “ but I believe it is generally man that makes them so. He is the tyrant and the curse of the races below him ; but I question much whether he will not be hereafter accountable for their perversion, as well as for their sufferings.”

This was the first humane or rational senti-

ment that Lilly had ever heard clearly and distinctly enunciated in her life. If by chance a reflection of this nature had been dropped by the passing guests she waited on at the Huntsman, she was too much absorbed in attending to her business, and her intellect was too much blunted to heed it. Her ears were open now; but she had, nevertheless, but a very obscure conception of Abel's meaning—of his allusion to man's future accountability she had not the least. She did not, however, admire him the less for not understanding him. On the contrary, she looked up at him with both wonder and reverence, whilst she silently patted and stroked poor Pipes, as a practical acknowledgment of that much of Abel's homily that her natural sympathies enabled her to appropriate.

Thus, each lightened of much of their cares, they trudged cheerily along the road; Abel questioning and Lilly answering; a process

as instructive to her as to him ; for, whilst he gathered information with respect to her past life, she, in some measure, learnt to review it and to comprehend it. She, at least, began to perceive that such a life as hers had hitherto been was not a necessity, and that her ignorance had been abused and herself ill-treated. She felt every moment more happy that she had followed Abel, and this self-gratulation inspired her with an animation that transformed her into quite a different person to “ the stupid little girl at the Huntsman ;” whilst, at the same time, it lent an alacrity to her services, that stood well in the place of the affection that was yet undeveloped. Matty herself could scarcely have been more ready and attentive, and certainly not more humble.

• No longer afraid of missing his resting-place, which was a very lowly inn standing somewhat back from the road, and anxious not to over-fatigue his companion, Abel frequently indulged in a little repose ; so that it

was eight o'clock before Lilly announced that, from his description, she thought they had reached the spot. The exclamation of the good woman of the house soon announced that she was right; and then came the usual inquiries after Matty; and, by the answers, Lilly learnt, for the first time, that this rival whom she had begun to fear was dead.

"Well, to be sure!" exclaimed Mrs. Wylie, "is Matty Lintock dead, with her fair hair and her pretty blue eyes! Who'd have thought it! Well, I'm sorry, to be sure! And you must be badly without her, Mr. White—but I see you've got another girl."

"Yes," replied Abel, gravely. "God sent her to me in my need."

"Well, to be sure! Matty Lintock dead!" pursued Mrs. Wylie; "I don't know how to bring it to my mind; she was such a fresh, wholesome-looking little creatur; one would never have thought it."

"She took a fever," said Abel, speaking

with difficulty ; “ the scarlet fever—it was raging in the place, and it was His will to take her from me.”

“ And it’s that has brought you back this way so soon, I suppose?” said Mrs. Wylie.

“ Yes,” replied the old man ; “ I’m going back to tell her mother that Matty’s gone ;” and thus through the whole way they travelled there were lamentations for the child.

From various motives, Abel entered into no explanations about Lilly, who, weary with her long walk, was glad to get some supper, and go to the tidy bed that was provided for her ; for Abel was not treated as a beggar—having never before been seen on the road exactly in that character. He had, indeed, often received gratuitous relief from the charitable, who were moved by his blindness and his gray hairs to offer it ; but he had hitherto travelled as a merchant of tapes, and pins and needles, carrying the basket that held his wares, slung before him by a strap, passing

over his shoulders; whilst Matty had charge of the merchandize and conducted the sale. But it was impossible for him to pursue this trade alone; and, when death deprived him of his grandchild, he had disposed of his basket and determined to beg his way home again—if home he could be said to have.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HISTORY OF ABEL WHITE.

Abel White was the son of a very poor curate in the West of England ; but, poor as his father was, his childhood had been well cared for. A heavy sufferer himself by the anomalous position he was placed in—that of a gentleman with seventy pounds a year—Gilbert White resolved not to ruin his son by the same mistake ; so he put his pride in his pocket, and, instead of setting Abel to study the classics, he gave him a good plain education, and endeavoured to shape his views to an humbler but less anomalous line of life.

Abel, however, without any particular talent, had a considerable taste for books,

and was rather averse to his father's prudent project; although he complied so far as to allow himself to be apprenticed to a haberdasher and hosier in the county town; and from his own good principles performed his duty in the situation selected for him. Still, he did not like it; and his love for books, augmenting with the difficulties necessarily in the way of his obtaining them, became a passion, to indulge which he deprived himself of that degree of rest that the maintenance of his health required. The books he borrowed of whoever would lend them; but his means of obtaining light being very limited, he endeavoured to train himself to read with scarcely any; straining his eyes night after night, during the hours he should have passed in sleep, to decipher the page by the faint gleams of the moon or a rushlight; persuading himself that habit was everything; and that in due time he should see, like a cat, in the dark; till he at length produced a

disease in his eyes, which, after incapacitating him for any such pleasures for the future, finally, at a later period of his life, terminated in total blindness.

Before this misfortune overtook him, however, Abel was a husband and a father. The first thing that reconciled him to measuring tape was love. The object of his passion being almost as poor as himself, it was only by complying entirely with his father's views that he could hope to maintain her; the visionary projects he had formed of finding some more clerkly vocation being entirely dissipated by the weakness of his sight. His father, foreseeing the calamity that awaited him, and content with the character of the young woman, eagerly promoted the match; dreading lest his son should be cast upon the world in his darkness, without any hand of duty or affection to guide him. He therefore strained every effort to aid the young couple; and, by the co-operation of her friends, who

looked upon her union with the son of the curate as an ascending step in life, they were ultimately established in a respectable small shop, sufficiently stocked with haberdashery to make a fair beginning. Orderly, prudent, self-denying, and strictly honest, Abel White and his wife carried on their little trade with small profits but with great content. They did not desire much, and, as they had only one child, they did not need much; and, had it not been for Abel's failing sight, they would have lived almost without a care. But his eyes were always growing worse, till at length poor Abel was blind: and he could no more behold the ever comfortable face of his affectionate wife, or sun himself in the bright eyes of his little Martha.

As misfortunes never come singly, it was not long before this calamity was followed by another. In reaching a box from an upper shelf, Mrs. White overstrained herself, and, from some consequences of the injury, fell

into bad health. As soon as this occurred, her first thought was for Abel—what was to become of him if her services failed him, or if she died?

Alarmed for her much-loved husband, she immediately set about endeavouring to alleviate the threatened misfortune, by providing a successor to herself in the person of their little girl. She commenced immediately teaching the child, not only to wait upon her father, but to manage the shop; and, being a docile and intelligent creature, little Matty made such progress under her tuition, that when at fourteen she lost her mother, Abel's inextinguishable regrets at the departure of his wife were not materially aggravated by other evils—so well did Matty supply her place. She was the most affectionate of daughters, the most prudent of housekeepers—ever cheerful, active, and loving; and for the first four years of his widowhood Abel had daily cause to rejoice and be thankful.

But, besides her other recommendations, Matty was very pretty, and this, added to the many valuable qualities she possessed, procured her several offers of marriage from the young tradesmen of the neighbourhood. They looked upon Matty as a fortune in herself; but, as all their proposals involved the necessity of a separation from her father, she unhesitatingly rejected them, although one or two of the more eager aspirants offered to pay a small stipend for the old man's board and subsistence. But to leave her father to the mercy of strangers, Matty could not consent, and the suitors were therefore non-suited; till at length one presented himself who won Matty by what was, at once, her strength and her weakness—namely, her affection for her father.

The name of the successful candidate was Giles Lintock. His father had been in the same line of business as Abel, though on a rather more extensive scale; but, being but

an indifferent tradesman, he had never been a successful one. He had just made a living out of his shop, and that was all. When he died, his only son Giles succeeded to this inheritance, such as it was; and, on more accounts than one, Giles was desirous of obtaining the hand of Matty White. In the first place, her beauty pleased him; and he entertained a sentiment towards her that he dignified with the name of love; in the next, he was no more fond than his father had been before him of being nailed to his own counter; and such a wife as Matty would be invaluable to him, inasmuch as her trustworthy diligence would release him from confinement, without any risk to his pocket; and thirdly, he considered that Abel White's custom and stock, small though they were, would be no bad addition to his own.

Aware of the rock on which the other suitors had split, Giles went more cunningly to work, and won Matty's affections through

her devotion to her father. Promises cost him nothing ; the old man was to live with them ; and the comforts that were to surround his declining years formed the subject of many pretty pictures. Neither did Giles do this with a deliberate intention to deceive ; but he wished to marry Matty White, and he seized the most ready way to gain his object, without thinking or caring how far he might be able or willing, hereafter, to fulfil his promises. They answered his purpose for the time perfectly. Whether Matty might have ever given him her heart, had he not thus blinded her through her affections, is extremely doubtful ; for, although he did not want some of those qualities which are apt to win women, it is probable that her just mind would have been repelled by his want of principle. As it was, she shut her eyes to his faults, believing that his kind heart and his regard for herself would soon correct them. He had had an indifferent father and a dis-

reputable mother ; “ and it was only a wonder that poor Giles was as good as he was.” Such was Matty’s view of the case ; and, as Abel both literally and metaphorically saw only with her eyes, it was natural that he should make no opposition to the match.

So they were married. Poor people make no settlements ; and, as soon as the ceremony was performed, Giles stepped into possession of all his wife’s little havings and holdings ; for what was Abel’s was hers ; the old man being like a child in their hands, and never thinking of interfering or objecting to any thing that was proposed. In accordance, therefore, with Giles’s plan, the little house and shop which had been bought by the friends of the young people at the period of Abel’s marriage was sold ; and, whilst the proceeds of the sale went into Giles’s pocket, the stock was removed to augment his own. It is true, that Abel came with it, and was ensconced in a tidy room which his daughter

had furnished with every comfort for him ; and at first matters went well enough. But the poor young wife soon saw cause for alarm. It was not that her husband left the management of the business entirely to her — that she did not mind ; but his draughts upon the till became daily more disproportioned to their receipts ; and she soon had reason to know that the company he kept was not likely to improve his morals. She concealed her apprehensions from her father as long as she could ; and, although Abel did think his son-in-law was too much abroad, it was not till his daughter was confined of her first child that he became in any degree aware of Giles's extravagance and irregularities ; for even then the husband could not stay at home to take care of the shop ; whilst the domestic funds ran so low, that there was actually a deficiency of ready money for the incidental expenses of the occasion. Now, as Matty was a frugal housekeeper, and they had a toler-

ably good business, it was not difficult to guess the source of the deficit. However, Matty begged her father to say nothing on the subject to Giles, for, of all things, she dreaded any disagreement in that quarter. Abel obeyed her; and, when she recovered, matters went on as before.

But it was a hard struggle for the young wife to keep the business afloat, and only by means of the greatest caution and self-denial that she succeeded; and even these would not have sufficed for the six years that she fought through her difficulties, had not her merits and sufferings excited the sympathy both of her customers and her creditors. The former adhered to her, and the latter spared her, often to their own inconvenience. But Giles's evil genius was too strong for them; and, in spite of their indulgence and her struggles, every year saw her embarrassments augmenting; till at last she sank altogether, and the shop was shut up. But even then

her friends did not fail her; they engaged two rooms for her, and her father, and her children; and exerted themselves to furnish her with needlework. But the reckless libertine, whose habits and tastes had sunk with his fortunes, poisoned the atmosphere of even this humble abode; and at length drove Abel out of it; and the son of the curate was obliged to take refuge in the poor-house, where he pined in sorrow for his daughter's misery and his own separation from her.

This last blow was the heaviest of all to Matty; but it was one she had long foreseen and tried to provide against. With such a husband and a young family of children, she knew that she must, ere long, resign all hope of being her poor blind father's guide and comfort; and she had early set about preparing a substitute, as her mother had done. She had accustomed her eldest child, who was called Matty, after herself, from her in-

fancy, to attend upon her grandfather; and, as the little girl was a counterpart of what she had been in her own childhood, her instructions were perfectly successful. Matty the second became Abel's good angel; and, the attachment being mutual, she almost broke her heart when the old man was withdrawn from her care, and sent, or rather when he retired, to the poor-house; for, to the last, his daughter sought to avoid the separation. But it was inevitable. Whilst they resided in the shop, although the blind father had many rebuffs to encounter, yet, as the family had a decent house over their heads, and Giles was rarely at home, Matty contrived to prevent a disruption; but, when they were circumscribed to two small rooms, their remaining together was no longer practicable. Not that the husband was often at home, either; but his visits were uncertain; and, when he did come, his behaviour was intolerable.

Abel pined in the poor-house, and little Matty pined out of it; but how they could be brought together it was not easy to see, till a friendly neighbour suggested the plan that had afterwards succeeded so well.

“Why couldn’t Abel go about the country with little Matty, and grind an organ, as I saw a blind man doing to-day?” said Mrs. Jones. “She’s such a steady little thing, that she could lead him well enough, although she is so young; and Mr. White is hale and hearty, and could walk well enough.”

“I don’t know that,” said Mrs. Lintock. “My father is not so strong as he was.”

“To be sure not,” replied the other; “how should he be, shut up from week’s end to week’s end in a workhouse? Besides, any body may see he’s breaking his heart there, poor old man, and well he may!”

The mother at first recoiled from the idea of letting her pretty little Matty travel about the country, exposed to so many perils, and

with no other protector than an old blind man; but there were various inducements, on the other hand, that at length induced her to hint the proposal to her father; and his eagerness for the realization of the project soon bore down the remaining objections. It was evident to herself also that she should be obliged, ere long, to part with the child, who must needs get her own living, and be sent into the world to encounter the evils and difficulties that bestrew the path of the very poor; for besides that, the mother could not maintain her — the home visited by that reckless father was not a home for a young girl.

Then, the confinement she necessarily endured was as injurious to the child as the atmosphere of the poor-house was to Abel; and finally difficulties were considerably alleviated by a few of Mrs. Lintock's former friends coming forward, and agreeing to fit out the old man, by subscription, as a small

merchant in threads, tapes, pins, and needles—such wares, in short, as he had formerly been accustomed to deal in; and with these, neatly arranged in a basket, and with a volume of instruction and advice stored in her little head, Matty and her grandfather were launched into the world, in this new character; and so well did the child fulfil the expectations that had been formed of her, that all parties had reason to congratulate themselves on the success of the enterprise. Not only did Abel contrive to earn a living, but, when he made his annual visits to his daughter, he had generally something to spare in aid of her hard-earned and slender means; whilst the constant change of air, exercise, and contentment kept the travellers in better health than they had ever known before.

And thus for four years had Abel White and his little companion roamed the world, when an attack of malignant fever snatched

her from his arms, and left him alone to grope his way back as best he could, with his sightless eyes, to communicate the sad news to his unfortunate daughter.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRAVELLERS REACH THE END OF THEIR JOURNEY.

No words can depict poor Abel's woe at the death of his grandchild ! Everything combined to render his loss inappreciable. There was not only the inexpressible love he had felt for her, and the anticipation of her mother's grief, but there was also his own utter desolation. He must grope his way back, and, having poured this additional drop of bitterness into his daughter's already too bitter cup, shut himself up in the poor-house again for the rest of his days. It was when he was overwhelmed with this weight of affliction that Lilly came to his aid ; and it was natural enough that he should look upon her as the especial gift of God. Certainly, no two per-

sons could need each other more, and they had met in the very nick of time—each helpless and forlorn, but capable of incalculable service to the other.

When Matty died, Abel had sold off his basket and its contents, knowing he should not be able to carry on his trade alone; so that he was altogether in flourishing circumstances as regarded pecuniary matters, and was able to supply his new companion's necessities without inconvenience.

Never had Lilly waked with so cheery a feeling as she did after her first night's rest at Mrs. Wylie's; and no wonder! For, however poor a lot it may seem to travel the world as the companion of a blind beggar, certain it was that her condition was immeasurably improved by this change in her fortunes. The very sense of freedom was much in itself; and the escaping from her harsh cousins and the dreaded Luke was a blessed emancipation from a hated slavery, hitherto

indeed endured with dull submission, because not understood; but which, seen by the light of a single day's liberty, became abhorrent. Then, Abel White was such a contrast to the Littenhaus family. The curate's son had not forgotten his gentle blood and early breeding; moreover, he was by nature a kind-hearted, reflecting man; and the soft tones and (compared to what she had been accustomed to) polished language, in which he addressed her, fell musically on her ear, and soothingly on her heart; arousing and awakening the sympathies that had languished in the cold atmosphere that had hitherto surrounded her. Besides, Lilly was to him an angel—a God-given help and aid—and therefore doubly to be cherished; so that, from the neglect and contempt to which she had been formerly subjected, she found herself all at once translated into an object of the tenderest care and almost reverential regard.

This was just what her nature needed, and,

under the warm sun of kindness, it unfolded with astonishing rapidity. It was so cheering and encouraging to find her little offices requited with gracious acceptance instead of ungracious sufferance ; she began to feel what it is to live in the sweet service of love ; and the old blind beggar, growing from hour to hour in her affections, exciting her wonder by his remarks and conversation, and her gratitude by his thoughtful kindness, became a deity to her, as she was a ministering angel to him ; whilst every day's intercourse, by convincing him of the bodily subjection and mental blindness in which she had been held, tended to release his conscience from any uneasiness with respect to the propriety of facilitating her escape, and keeping her with himself.

So they begged along the way, from day to day ; for, although Abel was not wholly penniless, his funds were not so large as to preclude the necessity of replenishing his purse ; and

he had, at present, no other means of doing so, except by asking charity. But, whatever evil the initiation into so idle a life might be likely to do Lilly, he endeavoured to counteract by the instruction he administered : and in this manner, they advanced by easy journeys, till they reached the South West of England.

It was not till they were approaching the town where Matty Lintock and her husband lived, that Abel White began to feel in its full extent the embarrassments that awaited him. Though the memory of his little grandchild was as warm in his heart as ever, the interest excited by Lilly, and the excitement produced by the singular circumstances of their meeting, had considerably relieved his affliction, and raised him from the “slough of despond” into which he had previously sunk ; so that he had not sufficiently measured the difficulties that were before him. But now they presented themselves in their full pro-

portions. There was not only the pain of appearing before his daughter without her child, but there was the embarrassment of intruding a destitute stranger into the poor family that were unable to support themselves.

The idea of abandoning Lilly he could not bear; yet, unless friends came forward and fitted him out with a basket again, what could he do with her? Or what prospect was there for himself but the workhouse? To be sure, he might beg; but, although necessity had reconciled him to the temporary expedient, he recoiled from the degradation as regarded himself, and the corruption that would ensue as regarded Lilly, if he relied on charity as his permanent resource. Oppressed with these anticipations, he became gradually silent and abstracted; whilst Lilly, aware of the change, though unconscious of the cause, toiled on wonderingly and timidly by his side; for she had been so subdued by her early training, that the least reaction or apparent withdrawal

of kindness banished her new-found confidence, and threw her back into her former feelings of subjection.

It was on a cold, wet, dismal September evening that the poor travellers entered the city they were bound to. The wind blew in gusts through the streets, extinguishing the lamps, turning people's umbrellas inside out, and sending their hats skimming through the puddles and streaming kennels. As it was Saturday night, too, the streets were more than ordinarily thronged, and the poor blind man and his inexperienced guide found themselves in everybody's way and everybody in theirs.

Heartily glad was Lilly when they turned in at an open door, and Abel, with a heavy step and slow, led the way up stairs, till they reached the upper story. Here he stopped; and, bidding Lilly remain where she was, he laid his hand on the latch of a door to the right, and then, after pausing for a moment,

to summon courage for the scene that awaited him, he lifted it and entered. One dim candle burnt within, but that was enough to show Martha Lintock who it was; and never doubting that her child was behind him, she started from her seat and rushed to the door, crying, "Oh, father! Oh, Matty!" and, before he could prevent her, she had taken the astonished Lilly in her arms and dragged her into the room. Abel comprehended, though he did not see, her mistake.

"Why, it's not Matty!" she exclaimed as soon as the light fell on Lilly's face. "Why, father, who's this? Where is Matty? Oh, father, has anything happened to Matty?" she added anxiously, seeing the old man standing with his stick shaking in his trembling hand, unable to speak. "Is Matty dead, father? — and have you brought home a stranger instead of her?" said she, thrusting Lilly from her.

"Matty's gone!" said Abel, with a qui-

vering lip and voice ; “ the Lord has taken her from us ! ”

“ Oh, Matty ! Matty ! ” cried the mother, sinking into a chair and covering her face with her apron. “ Oh, Matty, my child ! ”

“ It was God’s will,” said Abel. “ You know, Martha, I would have given my life for hers, and blessed him for taking it.”

“ But where was it ? How was it ? ” asked Mrs. Lintock, when her tears had in some degree relieved her heart. “ She that was so strong and healthy ! ”

“ She died of a fever,” said Abel, “ nearly three hundred miles from this.”

“ Three hundred miles ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Lintock, the current of her feelings diverted for a moment ; “ then how have you ever got along ? ”

“ Badly enough, at first,” said Abel, “ till God sent me help.”

“ What help ? ” inquired his daughter, looking for the first time with some interest at the stranger.

“ This child,” said Abel, laying his hand on Lilly’s head ; for, alarmed at the first outburst of the mother’s grief and confused by the instinctive consciousness that she was an intruder, she had crept close to his side for countenance and support. “ This child, Martha,” said he. “ I had lost my stick, and the dog was lame and could not lead me ; and I stood in the middle of the highway, sightless, helpless, and alone. But God saw my distress—and sent this child to be my guide.”

“ And has she led you all the way ?—all the three hundred miles ?” inquired Mrs. Lintock, with surprise.

“ Two hundred and fifty of them,” said he, “ and more.”

“ Sit down,” said Martha, showing Lilly a seat, whilst the tears streamed down her cheeks. “ Father, you’re still standing—forgive me ! But you know how I loved Matty !”

“Everybody loved her!” said Abel, as his daughter led him to a chair: “there wasn’t a house we stopped at along the road, where the good woman wasn’t fond of Matty. But how are Lizzy and the boys?”

“Lizzy’s in bed with a cold, and the boys are not come in yet,” answered Mrs. Lintock, still sobbing, as her heart swelled with the recollection of her favourite child.

“And Giles?” said Abel.

“I haven’t seen him for these ten days,” was the reply. “But you’ll be hungry, father?”

“No,” answered Abel, turning out the contents of his pockets, which amounted to four or five shillings; “I am not hungry;” for the pain of this melancholy meeting had banished hunger; “but poor Lilly has had nothing since the morning. Here’s something to buy food.”

“I’ll go below and get something,” said Martha, quitting the room.

Abel sat with his forehead resting on his hands, that were crossed on the top of his stick; Pipes, stretched out with his head betwixt his fore-legs, and his nose close to his master's feet, lay in an attitude of expectation rather than of repose, feeling instinctively that there was a want of harmony in the mode of their reception, and, consequently, not quite assured that they were at the end of their day's journey; whilst Lilly, actuated by the same feeling, sat in an attitude of doubt and timidity on the edge of her chair, as if she were preparing to start up and evacuate the premises on the shortest notice. Her very breathing was so low and suppressed, that Abel's quick ears, intensified as his hearing was by the want of sight, could not detect that she was in the room; and for an instant the doubt crossed him whether she had not been fluttered away by Martha's surprise and emotion, and the sense of her own strangeness and intrusion.

“Lilly,” said he.

“Yes, father,” answered Lilly; for he had taught her to call him so.

“Don’t be frightened, my child; poor Martha’s not herself yet.”

“Shall we go away again to-morrow?” asked Lilly, already dreading some reverse of fortune, and anxious to resume her previous happy life.

“Not to-morrow,” answered Abel, himself oppressed with fears for the future.

“But soon, father? Shall we go soon?”

“I hope so,” said Abel; “but we must trust in God, Lilly, and be patient.”

But poor Lilly’s faith was yet in its infancy. She knew nothing of God but the name, before she met Abel; and, although he had lost no opportunity of enlightening her ignorance since, he had not been able to awaken in her any lively feeling of devotion or trust in the unseen. Lilly discerned nothing about her but the material world, and had

yet no glimpse of the airy spirits that guide us through its labyrinths. Her meeting with Abel, which he, in his child-like faith, looked upon as a special interference of Providence, appeared to her simply the result of her seating herself on the step of the house he lodged in. In short, Lilly had not arrived at seeing that "there is a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we may." So that her heart sunk within her; and for the first time since she was Abel's acknowledged companion, she felt very unhappy; so unhappy, that although she had had no food for several hours, she could not eat, and out of this circumstance gleamed the first little ray of comfort since she had entered Martha Lintock's door. The good, motherly Martha was distressed at seeing that neither of her guests could partake of the food she had purchased; and beginning to forget her own grief in their dejection, she tried to cheer them, and efface the effects of their painful reception. She questioned them about their

journey; and, addressing herself chiefly to Lilly—for to be kind to Lilly was to be kindest to Abel—she endeavoured to restore her to confidence, and not without some success; for Lilly was very susceptible to external influences. She had been easily subdued, yielding without resistance to the oppression that extinguished her; and she was as easily won by kindness, and quick to forget past storms in present sunshine.

At a late hour, Mrs. Lintock's boys came home; two wild lads of ten and eleven, who had been helped to some employment by the mother's friends, but who, it was feared, had too much of the father's blood in them to make much of it. They and the grandfather slept in one room, whilst Lilly shared the other with Martha and her little sick girl.

CHAPTER XIV.

LILLY MAKES FRIENDS.

The following morning being Sunday, whilst Martha staid at home to nurse her sick child, Abel took Lilly and the two boys to the Cathedral. The latter, however, preferred amusing themselves outside the doors; but Lilly and the old man went in, and found seats on a bench appropriated for the poor; and here, for the first time, Lilly became sensible to the effects of music. The solemn grandeur of the interior, too, impressed her; and the chanting of the choristers in their white surplices, together with the loud swell of the organ, filled her with a strange sensation of awe and wonder. Till she joined Abel, she had never been in any place of

worship ; since that, she had been in several, of various denominations, for none came amiss to him—he was ready to pray with all men ; but neither the decent routine of the establishment, nor the more energetic appeals to Heaven of the dissenting churches, had ever penetrated Lilly's understanding, or touched her heart, through which her understanding was to be reached. She was there an unmoved spectator of a drama she did not comprehend ; and which had no meaning for her. But now the lofty nave, and the dimly-lighted aisles, and the prayers flung up to Heaven in such appealing tones by those young voices, awakened her imagination ; and when she saw the dean move slowly up the aisle to the altar, preceded by the verger, she felt inspired by a vague reverence for she knew not what—an undefined consciousness that there was something out of, and beyond, this world, and an obscure notion of the purport of this pompous and solemn worship.

In this Cathedral Abel's father had been a minor canon, and the blind man, when a boy, had been acquainted with every nook of the edifice, and with every monument it contained. There, in the north transept, lay the ancestors of the blind beggar; and he showed Lilly the tomb of Rupert de Witte, with its knightly emblazonments; and the flat stone that covered the remains of Dame Margery White, Abel's great grandmother.

Lilly was very silent that day, and she wished exceedingly that the next had been Sunday too, that she might hear that music and see those "long drawn aisles again."

In the mean time, poor Abel's mind was engrossed with the very important consideration of how he was to keep out of the workhouse, and how contrive to subsist without parting with Lilly. Remaining with his daughter was out of the question, unless he and his *protégée* could have done something to support themselves; nor even then would

it have been practicable, if Giles Lintock came home ; which he might do any day. His darling project was, again to start on his travels, with a well-furnished basket of threads and tapes ; but where was he to get it ? The whole afternoon Abel sat racking his brain for some expedient that would enable him to resume his previous mode of life. Silent and abstracted, with his forehead resting on his stick, as was his usual attitude when depressed or perplexed, he forgot Lilly, or appeared to forget her, when he was thinking most about her : whilst she, shrinking into herself, with her feelings of strangeness and timidity, found herself all at once, and most unexpectedly, translated from the free air and roving life she had so much enjoyed, to close confinement in a dull, dark room, the very atmosphere of which seemed heavy with sorrow ; and, instead of the easy confidence and tender watchfulness that, during their journey, had been gradually transforming her from a dull serf to an

animated human being, with consciousness and affections, she felt herself a burthen and an intruder—a neglected alien, in an unhappy family, who had too many wants and sorrows of their own to have any sympathy to spare for hers. So she sat crouching in a corner, unwilling to obtrude her existence on any body; whilst Abel was buried in his cogitations, and Martha busied herself in nursing her sick child.

In this way passed the Sunday, and Lilly went to bed extremely unhappy; but the sorrows of childhood—and Lilly, though nearly sixteen, was a mere child—do not banish sleep; so she slept soundly, unconscious that Martha had been up all night with Lizzy, whose illness had taken a sudden turn for the worse. When she opened her eyes, she saw the child tossing on the bed with crimson cheeks, and the poor mother kneeling beside her, looking pale and worn with her night's watching; and with her own throat

and head bound up with a handkerchief, as if suffering from cold.

Lilly arose, and dressed herself in silence, and whilst she was doing so, Mrs. Lintock asked her if she thought she could light a bit of fire in the next room and boil a little water for breakfast. She said she could; and set about it, with the readiness prompted by her desire to do something that should make her situation in the family less uncomfortable, and with the adroitness acquired by long practice. The fire was lighted, the water boiled, and the humble breakfast served, with an alacrity that surprised Mrs. Lintock, in whose eyes she had hitherto exhibited herself as little brighter than the stupid little girl of former times; and, being once set to work, and seeing that she gave satisfaction and could make herself useful, Lilly kept herself astir; setting the rooms in order, preparing the dinner for the boys, and making the barley-water for the sick child; and as for all she

did Martha thanked her kindly, she became hourly more capable, resuming her former habit of diligence, enlightened and directed by her lately-acquired intelligence.

Thus passed the second day; and, on the third, her services were more needed still; for now Martha was also very ill, and unable to rise; so that Lilly had all the household duties to perform, and to nurse the sick into the bargain. Yet, the more she had to do, the happier she was.—Away went all the timidity and embarrassment, and the stupidity with it. She was a free and voluntary worker now. Martha said, “What she should have done without her she could not tell, and she believed it was God’s providence that had sent her to help them in their need;” and Abel nodded his head significantly, implying that he did not doubt it. She could sit up at night, too, and keep awake, as it became very needful she should, from the condition of the patients; for of late she had had plenty

of sleep and easy days and nights, instead of being overwatched and overwrought, as she was at the Huntsman. And then, her heart was in her work; for it was Abel's child and grandchild she was attending; besides, we easily grow to love those we serve, when our service is thankfully accepted.

Meantime, however, want was beginning to steal in at the door. Poor Martha's needle-work lay unfinished; and, although Lilly took it up, and did a few stitches when she had time, she could make but slow progress. Neither was she very dexterous at this kind of work; hers had been of another description. Abel, humbled by his daughter's distress, would have gone out with Pipes to beg; but she entreated him not to do so, in a place where they had once been known to live so respectably; so, finding himself but a useless burthen, he once more took refuge in the poor-house. A small relief from the parish was also sent to the family, but very inade-

quate to their wants ; whilst they had latterly been a good deal lost sight of by those former friends, who had assisted them in their early difficulties ; not from any decrease of desert on the part of Martha, but because it was pronounced useless to attempt to serve her, whilst Giles remained a clog upon her industry ; it was only giving her money for him to squander. Besides, the world gets tired of people who persist in being unfortunate ; when it sees that a few efforts do not suffice to lift a poor wretch out of the slough, it loses patience, and allows him to sink into it, over head and ears. So that great was the desolation of this poor house in which Lilly had found shelter ; and, in the midst of it, came home Giles Lintock.

Giles had treated his wife so ill, that by this time he had grown to mortally hate her ; and he never came home at all, except when his usual expedients for living failed, and he found it convenient to sponge upon her little

means. As he was at the present moment greatly in need of money, he had returned with the intention of raising it on whatever goods and chattels of hers he could lay his hands on; but her illness, and that of the child, interfered with his plan. She had herself pawned whatever she could spare; and, if he had taken the bed from under her just now, he would probably have been mobbed, or have brought the parish officers about his ears; so he forbore; but, as he had nowhere else to go, he remained at home, eating up the tables and chairs, and whatever else he could turn into money; even to his wife's silver thimble, and the linen that had been entrusted to her by her employers.

At length, things being so bad that they could get no worse, they began to take a little turn for the better. The doctor who had attended the patients becoming aware of their distress, interested his wife and some other ladies in their favour; and the fever, from

which they were both suffering, having reached its critical term, began to subside. Giles, too, tired of staying at home, and finding he could make nothing of it, as the little aid given to Martha was so managed that he could not get hold of the money, relieved them of his presence; which was, in itself, a great improvement.

It may easily be conceived that, by this time, Martha Lintock's feelings towards Lilly were very different to what they had been previous to her illness. The forlorn little stranger had proved herself a most valuable and efficient aid in her great need; and now, to use a Scotticism, "she could not think enough of her;" and what she thought she said, to everybody that would listen to her story. The consequence of which was, that the ladies began to take an interest in Lilly; and one amongst them offered to receive her into her service, as under nursery-maid, at six pounds per annum. By the advice of Mrs.

Lintock, she accepted the proposal; and, after due purification, and the lapse of such a period as was thought sufficient to preclude the danger of infection, she was installed in her new situation; where we will, for the present, leave her; whilst we return to inquire into the effects of her mysterious disappearance on those she had left behind.

Mrs. Hobbs had sent Lilly forth, partly out of good nature, thinking her confinement cruel and unreasonable, and partly in order that, during "the thick of the washing," she might keep her own troublesome child safely out of the way. As order and regularity were not the distinguishing characteristics of the Hobbs family, little Sarah's not returning to dinner excited neither curiosity nor displeasure in the mother's breast; nor was it till the afternoon that she began to express any surprise at the child's continued absence. Then she did begin to "wonder what had come of Sarah!" and ever and anon, betwixt the rubbing and

the wringing, she went to the door, and looked up and down the street, in hopes of seeing her. As the evening advanced, the wonder became mingled with uneasiness; her visits to the door were more frequent, and she asked the neighbours and every passenger that she happened to be acquainted with, if they “had seen any thing of her girl.” But nobody being able to give her any intelligence, her anxiety augmented so much, that she finally abandoned her tubs, and started forth herself in search of her darling. But, by this time, the children that had been playing with Sarah in the morning, had retired to their homes, and Miss Hobbs was too diminutive and unimportant a personage to have attracted the notice of the public in general; so that, after an hour spent in seeking her, Mrs. Hobbs was returning, with no more information of her daughter than could be extracted from some evanescent glimpses of a yellow frock and green pinafore, which one or two of her

acquaintance averred to have seen in company with several other girls, in the Market Square, some time during the day, when, at the corner of a street, she met the identical Sarah, with her finger in her eye ; weeping like Niobe, with a torn bonnet and a very dirty face.

“ You nasty little thing, you ! ” exclaimed the mother, who, having been very frightened, was, of course, very angry ; “ where the dickens have you been all this while ? Here am I obliged to leave my work to come and look after *you*—where’s the girl that went out with you ? ”

“ She went away and left me ! ” sobbed out Sarah, rubbing her eyes still harder with her dirty fingers.

“ Left you ! when did she leave you ? ” inquired Mrs. Hobbs, the current of whose wrath was quite ready to change its direction.

“ This morning,” sobbed Sarah.

“ And where’s she gone to ? ” again inquired Mrs. Hobbs.

“ I—don’t—know,” sobbed Sarah.

“ You don’t know ! Why, didn’t she tell you where she was going ? ”

“ No ; she went away, and didn’t say nothing,” sobbed Sarah, with a fresh burst of grief, or rather of passion ; for, in the first place, she was tired and hungry ; and, in the next, she had been ill-treated and teased by some children bigger than herself, which catastrophe had terminated her day’s amusement, and sent her home in a very ill temper ; and, accordingly, very well disposed to lay the whole blame of her misfortunes on her absent companion. As for Lilly’s desertion, it was a fact she took for granted, without being disposed to inquire too curiously into its historical accuracy. She had, in reality, never sought her, or thought of her, till she needed her aid to defend her against her tormentors—then she was not forthcoming, and Miss Hobbs naturally felt herself exceedingly ill-used and neglected. It is needless to say, that Mrs.

Hobbs adopted her daughter's opinion; and, whilst she sympathizingly led her home, she did not fail to descant eloquently on the enormity of Lilly's offence, and to "bless herself for ever sending the child out with such a stupid good-for-nothing dawdle."

When Sarah, however, was safely lodged, and her afflictions mitigated by the application of a good supper, Mrs. Hobbs began to think a little more seriously of Lilly's absence, and how she should answer for it to Charlotte Littenhaus. The meaning of it she could not divine. That a girl of Lilly's age, "with a tongue in her head," as she said, should be lost in a town no larger than Hotham, she could hardly conceive; neither from what she had seen of her could she imagine that she had formed a deliberate design of absconding. The most probable hypothesis was, that she had found some acquaintance, or been enticed away by somebody, and would return the next day.

“ And, please the pigs, she comes before Miss Littenhaus returns, there’ll be no harm done !” was her final orison for that night, as she closed her eyes to sleep.

But Lilly came not ; and the resentment of Mrs. Hobbs was naturally in proportion to her consciousness of being herself the cause of the misfortune, and to her apprehensions of what might ensue when Charlotte Littenhaus returned, which she did not do, however, for nearly a week. To do her justice, Mrs. Hobbs had neglected no means that she was mistress of to find Lilly in the interval ; but, as her departure had been unobserved by any body, she had little chance of success.

The anger and astonishment of Charlotte, when she found the bird flown, it would not be easy to describe. Of course, Mrs. Hobbs, with a due instinct of self-preservation, took care not to criminate herself ; and, according to her representation of the case, Lilly’s going forth had been an act of her own will.

“ Young folks will have their own way, you know, Miss Charlotte ; and it wasn’t no business of mine to interfere with her, as I’d no orders so to do. When you was away, she had no need to say with your leave, nor by your leave ; and she isn’t no such a chicken, but she would have found her way back if she’d chose to come ;” and, so saying, Mrs. Hobbs nodded her head significantly ; leaving the angry Charlotte to draw what conclusions she liked.

CHAPTER XV.

SYMPTOMS OF DANGER.

The displeasure of Charlotte, however, was far exceeded by that of Luke ; who came over immediately on the receipt of the unwelcome intelligence, in a state of extreme consternation and suppressed wrath ; for Luke could always restrain the exhibition of his passion, when he thought it advisable to do so. The alarm he felt at Lilly's disappearance and the importance he attached to recovering her, were greater than it would have been prudent to display. She was gone just at the crisis when he had begun to learn her value and to fear her power ; and from the very circumstance of her going—for he never doubted that she had done so designedly—he drew the

conclusion, that though she might not be acquainted with the first, she was with the last—she undoubtedly knew too much, and might use her knowledge, sooner or later, to his destruction.

Luke's motive for the sudden resolution to marry the despised and neglected Lilly was a complicated one. His objects were, wealth and advancement, on the one hand ; and security on the other. Jacob's dying words, which had fallen unheeded on the little girl's dull ear, were not without their significance ; but till the conversation overheard by Charlotte, whilst attending the two officers at dinner, they did not know exactly who she was. They, and some comrades of theirs, had found her on board a wreck, which, in one of their nocturnal expeditions, they had accidentally fallen in with and plundered, in company with a gentleman who told them that the rest of the crew and passengers had put off in the boats ; but that he had refused to

accompany them, confident that they would never reach the shore—which they did not. For the sake of the money and valuables this stranger had about him, they took his life; in opposition to the wishes of old Jacob Littenhaus, who, though a smuggler, and not averse to the robbery, objected seriously to the needless shedding of blood. The party, however, maintained that their own safety demanded the sacrifice; at least, their only alternative was to resign their booty, a thing not to be thought of. They even wished to murder the child also; but, on this question, Jacob's opinion prevailed, and she was consequently spared, and brought up to believe that she was their relation.

In spite, however, of the precautions they had used to prevent detection, when it was discovered that the wreck had been visited and plundered, some suspicion fell upon the Littenhaus family; and it was this circumstance that had ultimately determined them

to quit that part of the country. Too much observation cramped their exertions; and in the lonely inn on the coast of Sussex, they found exactly the conditions they required; a wild stretch of barren common, thinly populated; and a house which had once carried on a flourishing business, but which the making of a new road and the sudden rise of a fishing-village into a watering-place had ruined.

The life of the Littenhaus family was a curious instance, not only of that perversion of morals which makes people prefer wrong to right, but also of that not uncommon mistake which induces them to lead a life of continued sacrifice for the sake of acquiring that which they can never enjoy. Their illicit practices constrained them to a dull and solitary mode of existence; nor were their gains sufficient to justify a hope that they might some day spend in peace and pleasure the money earned in peril. The situation of the sisters was peculiarly unpleasant; for they

had not even the excitement which seasoned the life of the brothers. "Six dull, idle days, with now and then a guest to attend to; and a visit to church on the seventh, dressed far above their condition," might have been stereotyped as the standing record of their weary existence. Astonishing the eyes of the rustics with their rich silks and laces, and inspecting the stores of those their drawers contained, seemed their only pleasure, excepting their occasional visits to Miss Grosset, the dressmaker; and their other acquaintances at Hotham.

But infatuated mankind have such a strange love of money for its own sake, that very frequently those who are the most entirely incapable of using it, in such a manner as to purchase pleasure for themselves or any body else, are not the less eager to acquire it; whether it be to confine it under lock and key in their strong box; or to muddle it away in ungraceful, unsatisfactory profusion;

and so it was with these people, more especially Luke; who united with an utter want of principle an intense selfishness and an iron will. He was the demon of the family; tyrannizing over his infirm father whilst he lived; and since his death, though the youngest son, domineering equally over the other members of it: availing himself of the vanity of the sisters and the weakness of his brother to gain his own ends; which were, after all, only such as a more rational human being would have looked upon as *means*; for of ends, properly so called, he had none — not even present enjoyment; for he pursued no pleasures nor indulged in any recreations; nor had any ultimate views whatever. The first gleam of any such appeared in this project of marrying Lilly; but even this might have been resolved into a desire to clutch a large sum of money; for he had no idea of the enjoyments of a more exalted station, nor any taste for them. His second motive, as we have hinted, was to

ensure his own safety by having her in his power. The circumstances connected with Shorty's death, Winny's visit, and the bit of linen, had led him to the conclusion that she was more observant and reflective than he had imagined; and that she knew more than was consistent with his own security. A wedding-ring, however, is probably not the instrument he would have selected to silence her, had it not been for the light thrown upon her birth and fortunes by the officers. The name of the ship, as well as that on some of the property they purloined belonging to her protector, together with other corroborative circumstances, left no doubt in their minds that the despised Lilly was the lost heiress, Isabel Adams. She had, indeed, whilst her recollections of her home and her previous life were fresh in her infantile mind, told them that her name was Isabel; though, at other times, she said it was Lilly; which last they adopted, concluding it to have been

used as a diminutive. Her surname they never clearly ascertained from her. When they questioned her, she would sometimes say she was called Miss Lilly, and at others Isabel Addin—at least, so it sounded to their ears—and as they were rather desirous that she should forget it than otherwise, they soon ceased to make any attempts at recalling it to her memory.

The poor little girl was, at first, not insensible to the change that had taken place in her fortunes—she felt, though she could not understand it; but too young to reflect, or to collect, arrange, or methodize her thoughts, they gradually became confused and slipped from her grasp, leaving on her mind such a faint image of all that had happened to her before she came to live with her cousins, as she called them, that her previous life, if it ever occurred to her memory at all, seemed more like a dream than a reality. By nature, a lively and impressionable child, accustomed

to the greatest indulgence and tenderness, her mind became stultified and her spirit broken by continued harshness and unremitting labour; her growth was nipped, her fair skin assumed an unhealthy whiteness, her eye was heavy and her countenance stolid; whilst absorbed in the mechanical routine of duties imposed on her, she neither saw nor heard any thing that did not refer to them; and felt neither interest nor curiosity in what was passing before her eyes. Such was Lilly, till the kindness of Mrs. Ryland and Philip struck a chord in her heart; and, by arousing her affections, somewhat awakened the dormant faculties which subsequent occurrences were destined to further unfold.

But to return to Luke. When he found Lilly was really gone, and that such inquiries as he instituted through the town brought him no intelligence of her, he became seriously uneasy; and, according to the old adage that "conscience makes cowards," he anticipated

alarming consequences to himself from her evasion. Designedly, or otherwise, she would be led to reveal the circumstances of her past life ; and there was no telling how much she remembered, nor how much she knew. Her departure, so cleverly managed—for in order to exonerate herself, Mrs. Hobbs gave the whole proceeding the colour of a deliberate design on the part of Lilly—her departure alone was sufficient to prove that she was not the stupid, unmoved, unobserving tool they had thought her. It indicated that she had been playing a part, that she had been actuated by some distinct motive, and had only been waiting for an opportunity to put her plan in execution.

Now, Luke was one of those unhappily organized human beings in whom any injury, real or fancied—any crossing of his own plans, however they may have interfered with the rights of others—are wont to arouse an insane desire for revenge. For the rights of

others he had no respect ; indeed, he had no sense or consciousness of them—he saw nothing in the world beyond himself—he was the very incarnation of selfishness. Selfishness is always blind ; and inevitably takes the wrong way to its own ends, if its ends be happiness and enjoyment—but Luke's was the blindest of the blind ; for he not only spent his time, his cunning, and his labour, such as it was, in the dishonest acquirement of small gains, exposed to present peril and future ruin, without earning as much as he could have done by fair trade—most persons who take tortuous modes of getting money do this—but when he was crossed in any of the projects this self-love had framed, it became so angry with the smart of disappointment, that it ran away with him into the most perilous and profitless paths in pursuit of the revenge that it thirsted after, to restore its self-complacency ; and in this pursuit, seeing still nothing beyond the immediate gratifica-

tion of his passion, he stopped at no crime, nor was arrested by any considerations.

When he found, therefore, that Lilly had actually made her escape from his clutches, every passion of his soul was stirred ; his fears and his vengeance were fully aroused ; the hitherto despised little girl assumed in his eyes an immeasurable importance ; and to entrap her again in his toils immediately became the object which superseded all others.

That he should succeed in recovering possession of her, he did not doubt. Little more than a week had elapsed since her departure, and without money or friends she could not have gone far ; his first essay, therefore, after he had made his inquiries in the town and given notice to the parish officers to be on the look out for her, was to make a circuit round the immediate environs. But, as his perquisition did not happen to reach the ears of any of those few persons whom Lilly had requested to direct her to her temporary home, and as

she had passed along unobserved whilst following Abel, he gained no information. Still he found it difficult to believe that she was not sheltered in the neighbourhood; and, fortunately for Lilly, he lost the time which would have enabled him surely to overtake her, in seeking her where she was not. Several times he was about to start on a more extended circuit, when this persuasion on the one hand, and the difficulty of deciding which road to take on the other, deterred him; but so far from the delay mitigating his vengeful feeling or shaking his determination, the one was aggravated and the other re-enforced by the irritation of disappointment, and the mortification he felt at what, he supposed, must be her triumph at the success of her project.

Still there was no raging or storming; that was not Luke's way. He said little; but those sinister gray eyes and that broad, white, cadaverous face looked more demoniac than usual, whilst, maintaining the coldness of his

external demeanour, he privately gnashed his teeth, and silently swore deep oaths of a bloody vengeance when he clutched her again.

He had good cause for his wrath ; for, during this interval, the object of his pursuit was advancing happily along the road, little heeding the past, and never dreaming of the turmoil she was creating in the family she had abandoned ; and at length, when he did extend his quest further, he missed the track by one of those slight oversights that render unavailing so many pursuits. He did inquire for her at the village where Abel had first baited, which was about ten miles from Hotham ; but as the old man had not then been aware that she was following him, and as she had not entered the house, but merely sat down on a stone in the little street, till he came forth again, nobody had observed her. Mrs. Wylie's, where Abel and she had passed the first night, was only five miles beyond ; and, had he advanced so far, he would inevitably

have heard of her ; but this small, lone house was not thought of ; and the idea of advertizing her having suddenly entered his head, he turned his steps back for the purpose of carrying this resolution into effect, and so missed his game. He, however, inserted the advertisement in two of the local papers, offering five pounds reward for any information respecting her, and anxiously waited the result ; but none was elicited. He then renewed his search personally, but with no better success ; and week after week and month after month passed, without bringing any tidings of Lilly. Ambrose, and even his sisters, advised him to think no more about her : but his obstinate nature was only indurated by opposition, and he swore he would never give up the point, and that he would “ catch her yet.”

It was not till nearly a year had elapsed that he one day returned from Hotham, triumphantly holding a letter in his hand

which had been delivered to him at the office of the editor, who published the "Sussex Weekly Chronicle."

"Here," said he, "didn't I always tell you I'd get hold of her?"

"Is it about Lilly?" eagerly inquired the others.

"Where is she?" said Ambrose, holding out his hand to take the letter.

"Never mind," said Luke, seeming to recollect himself, and drawing it back; "*I* know where she is—that's enough!"

"You'd better let her alone, Luke," said Ambrose, significantly.

"You'd better mind your own business," answered Luke, drily; at the same time folding the letter and putting it in his pocket.

CHAPTER XVI.

LILLY COMMITS A MISDEMEANOUR.

We left Lilly installed as under nursery-maid in the family of a respectable solicitor; where she was well treated, well fed, and well clothed. Assuredly, since the hour the good ship Hastings was wrecked in the channel, Lilly Dawson had never been so well provided for. Her labour was light, and her situation altogether, for a young girl in her condition, unexceptionable. Moreover, she gave satisfaction to her employers. She had been trained to obedience and activity; and they found her honest and steady. The only fault they complained of was, that she was not lively. She was a dull companion to the children, and could not amuse them or enter into their sports.

This was natural enough ; she had had no childhood herself, and had known no sports nor plays. Like the children of the very poor, who become prematurely thoughtful about pence and halfpence, and the price of meal or the quartern loaf, she had been as prematurely involved in a routine of monotonous labour that had worked all the sport and play out of her. She was like a young horse that had been under a harsh breaker. This was a fault that could not be mended ; but, for the sake of her other good qualities, it was overlooked ; and Lilly might have kept her place, had it not been that, in spite of all these appliances, she was not happy. She pined for Abel, and she knew that Abel was pining in the poor-house. She loved the old man with the most tender and reverential affection ; she had acquired a taste for his conversation and instruction, which was to her the teaching of a sage and a philosopher ; she found nothing around her that could com-

pensate for the loss of his society, whilst her heart yearned to think he was wasting his latter days in sadness and sorrow. There were no companions for Abel in the poor-house; he had nobody to talk to, nor nobody to instruct there, for they did not care to hear him. He had no occupation, either. They tried to teach him to make baskets, but he was too old to acquire any dexterity at it; feeling his work was worthless, he could not do it; and time hung heavy on his hands. Then he sighed for the free air of heaven, the daily journey, that was at once his business and his pleasure; the road-side chats with other travellers, the variety furnished by his nightly stations, and the friendly recognitions of his hosts and hostesses. Above all, he sighed for his independence; and he mourned for the days when, humble as was his calling, he was honestly earning his bread, and even able to save a trifle to bring home to his daughter. Lilly knew all this, for she went

to visit him as often as she could ; and she saw how pallid and thin he looked, and how the expression of his features was changing, from that of cheerful resignation to one of hopeless dejection.

“ I don’t sleep, either, Lilly,” said he ; “ the want of air and exercise that I’ve been so long used to keeps me wakeful ; and then I lie on my hard bed, with my old bones aching, and thinking of past times—perhaps my bones used to ache, too, when we were travelling, but I was tired at night and slept soundly ; and I’d no time to think of them—now I’ve nothing else to think of. Ah, Lilly ! sorrow is a sorrowful thing when we’re old, for then we’ve no hope to help us to bear it—no hope—no hope ! ”

“ But, father,” said Lilly, anxious to find some source of consolation, “ you told me that good people had always something to hope.”

“ Ay, my child, beyond the grave,” returned Abel.

“ Well, father, then that’s something.”

“ Yes,” replied he, gravely ; “ it should be—but somehow, Lilly, I feel further from God here than I did when we trod the highways and the green lanes, where the birds sang in the hedges and the grasshoppers chirped in the fields. When I heard the bees buzzing amongst the wild flowers, I knew He was near me ; but there’s no joy, no gladness in a poor-house—no gathering of honey here, Lilly. Those joyous sounds of God’s own free scholars were *my* light ; they were eyes to me, as well as ears ; and, whilst they preached to me of His goodness, they showed me His works. But all is dark now, Lilly ; I breathe nothing but the thick air of this dank yard, enclosed within four brick walls ; I hear nothing but complaints—sometimes curses—and I think the Lord has forgotten me !”

And poor Lilly’s theology not being prepared to sustain the argument any further, she could only sigh and wish it were other-

wise ; and, after these conversations, she would walk slowly home, pondering on what had been said to her ; and less disposed than before to attend to the prattle of the children, or mingle with their sports.

Thus, slowly and heavily, passed the first six months of Lilly's service at the solicitor's. It was the month of May ; fine, genial, bright weather ; and she had found Abel, whom she had been visiting on the Sunday evening, more desponding than ever.

“Bring me a branch of hawthorn, Lilly,” said he, “when next you come—a sweet-smelling hawthorn ! Are the lilacs and laburnums coming out yet ? Next month the bean-fields will be in flower ;—what I would give for the full perfume of a bean-field now ! Lord ! how little we value thy blessings whilst we enjoy them ! I used to think I was thankful—but, God forgive me ! I often repined at the loss of my sight, when I should have been singing hallelujahs for what was left me.”

“ I’ll cut some hawthorn to-morrow, father, when I go out with the children,” answered Lilly, “ and I’ll bring it you at night, if I can get out before your gate’s shut ; and we have some laburnums and lilacs at the front of the house, and I’ll bring you some of them, too, when they’re in blossom.”

“ Do, my child,” said Abel. “ Your visits are my only comfort. Poor Martha cannot spare time to come often ; and, when she does, I know by her voice how unhappy she is, though she doesn’t complain ; and she leaves me more unhappy than before ; and I’m sure she goes away more unhappy herself, at seeing her old father ending his days in the workhouse.”

“ Martha has got a great job of work now,” said Lilly, “ and she’s very busy.”

“ Ay, so much the better—but it’s toil, toil, and no hope of anything better, while Giles Lintock lives. He hasn’t been home, has he ?”

“No,” answered Lilly. “I called this morning, as I went past from church, but he hadn’t been there.”

“So much the better,” said Abel. “It would be a mercy of the Lord if he never came again. You see, Lilly,” continued he, “I’ve more comfort in your coming to see me, because I have been of some use to you, one way or another, by the help of God. Poor as I am, it’s through me and mine, partly, that you’re better off than you used to be; but, when I hear the sad tones of poor Martha’s voice, that was once so cheerful, and feel her thin hand, and stroke her hollow cheek, I can’t help reproaching myself. I should never have let her marry Giles Lintock. Many a better man offered; but she sacrificed herself for me — and the end of it is, that she’s wretched, and I’m in the poor-house.”

The tears stood in Lilly’s eyes, as she listened to this mournful chant, seated beside

Abel on a wooden bench in the workhouse-yard ; but she was too inexperienced to detect any source of consolation, and too timid to suggest a hope of any amendment in his daughter's situation or his own. That night Lilly went home with a heart unusually saddened.

On the following morning, when the family-breakfast was over, she was summoned to the dining-room. Mr. Ross and the children had already left it ; and Mrs. Ross was seated at a side-table with a pen and ink, and her housekeeping-books beside her.

“Lilly, is that you ?” said she ; “come here — nearer ! — I want to speak to you ! What makes you look so grave, child ? You're not like a young girl — you've no spirits — no animation. Are you dissatisfied with your situation ?”

“No, ma'am.”

“I'm sure you've not too much to do, have you ?”

“No, ma’am.”

“And there’s nobody unkind to you, is there?”

‘No, ma’am.’

‘Well, then, do try to look a little more cheerful, will you?’

“Yes, ma’am,” replied Lilly, looking as grave as if she had been following a hearse.

“Well, that’s a bad beginning, Lilly,” said Mrs. Ross, unable to resist laughing at the incongruity between the girl’s countenance and answer; “but mind, Lilly, I am not dissatisfied with you. On the contrary, I think you are a very good, steady girl; and certainly it is better in your situation to be too grave than too gay. I think you have now been with me six months, haven’t you?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“And you have, therefore, half a year’s wages due to you. You know, I was to give you six pounds a year — wasn’t that our agreement?”

“I don’t know, ma’am,” answered Lilly ; for she had never had any money in her life ; and, having no idea whatever of what was meant by six pounds, she had paid no attention to that part of the bargain.

“Don’t you remember that I said I would give you six pounds a year?”

“Yes, ma’am,” answered Lilly, beginning to recall the circumstance.

“Well, then, your half-year’s wages amount to three pounds. As I am satisfied with you, I’ll make it three guineas—here they are !”

“Thank you, ma’am,” said Lilly, taking the three pieces of gold, and looking at them with wondering eyes.

“And now you’ve got your money, take care you don’t lose it,” continued Mrs. Ross. “Where will you put it?” Lilly blushed, but made no answer. “Perhaps you don’t know where to keep it? Shall I take care of it for you? You can have it whenever

you like, you know !” Lilly’s blush grew deeper. “I think it would be safer with me than with you, Lilly, unless you want to buy something with it—do you ?”

“No, ma’am,” answered Lilly, looking down, but still grasping the money as if she did not intend to part with it.

“Perhaps you had rather keep it yourself,” added Mrs. Ross, observing her attitude. “Would you ?”

“Yes, ma’am,” murmured Lilly, shily casting down her eyes.

“Oh ! very well — then keep it, my good girl ; only take care of it,” said Mrs. Ross. “And now you may go and send up Elizabeth ;” and Lilly quitted the room, with the money in her hand, and pervaded by a strange feeling, made up of wonder, joy, and perplexity.

Surely, she thought, those three bright pieces must be very valuable. But, if so, that they should be hers seemed very ex-

traordinary. But then again, if they really were hers, and, at the same time, so valuable as she supposed, what might she not do with them? Might she not relieve Martha Lintock's distresses and set Abel free? What a joyful idea! She felt quite bewildered and intoxicated with it; and, forgetting the message to Elizabeth, she went straight up to her own chamber, and there remained sitting on the side of the bed, with the money in her hand, till the upper nursery-maid, missing her from her daily duties, came to inquire what she was doing.

She put the money in her drawer, and went below; but how she longed for the evening, and how she wondered whether she should be permitted to go out when it arrived! a privilege that depended wholly on the humour and generosity of her superior; whom it was therefore her interest to please. But Lilly had hitherto had so little to think of, and was so unaccustomed to think at all,

that now that she had actually got something important in her head — now that an idea had taken possession of her brain, she was quite bewildered and unable to manage it. It ran away with her ; she did not know what she was about—did everything wrong, and forgot everything she should remember ; whilst the grave Mrs. Janet, quite unable to comprehend Lilly in this abnormal condition, kept quietly watching her out of the corner of her eye, for the purpose of deciding whether she had not been making too free with the ale-jug.

Thus, not without several rubs and crosses, passed the day ; and, as the evening approached, Lilly's excitement and abstraction only became the more observable. Her cheeks, which, from leading a more healthy life and being much in the open air, had lost their former pallor, were now crimson ; her eye was bright and unsettled, her hand was unsteady ; and she actually had the appear-

ance of being either under the influence of some stimulant, or in a state of incipient fever. Mrs. Janet was perfectly confounded.

Lilly was permitted to go out to visit her friends on every alternate Sunday evening; that was her established privilege; but her extra excursions were all, as we have said, under favour of Mrs. Janet, after the younger children were gone to bed. She thought, to-night, they never would go to bed. How wearisome their plays and prattlings were! How long they were bidding their papa and mamma *good night!* How Miss Caroline dawdled over her bread and milk! And how many times Master Henry threw off his nightcap, after she had tied it on! Then, there was no getting them through their prayers. Miss Lucy would persist in praying for the cat; and, let Mrs. Janet do what she would, little Johnny would not “pray God to bless his brothers and sisters.” And when they *were* in bed,

they would not go to sleep, they were so full of fun and mischief! till, at length, Johnny got peevish with being too long awake, and began to cry. Then he had to be pacified; but now, the matter becoming serious, Mrs. Janet set her veto against any more fun for that night; they would all be ill next day, and papa and mamma would be very angry; so, after one or two expiring efforts at rebellion on the part of Henry, they closed their laughing eyes; their soft cheeks sunk into their downy pillows, and they lay lapped in their rosy sleep.

Now was the moment that, when Lilly wanted to go and see Abel or his daughter, she was accustomed to request permission to do so. But this only happened occasionally, as she was expected to employ her evenings in general in mending the children's stockings, and so forth. In the present instance, her anxiety to go, on the one hand, and her consciousness of Mrs. Janet's dissatisfaction,

on the other, rendered the request a difficult one.

“ You’ll find plenty of work in the basket,” said the nurse, pointing to that which contained such articles of the children’s clothes as needed repair ; “ and there are some frills to be hemmed for Miss Caroline’s new night-caps.” Lilly approached the table where the basket stood. “ You had better do the stockings first,” added Mrs. Janet, “ and try if you can’t darn them more neatly. You made such a lump in one of the heels of Master Ross’s blue stockings, that he complained it hurt his foot.”

Lilly took out the stockings, sought for her needle and thimble, and sat down behind the nurse. Her head was in a whirl, betwixt the desire to get away, and the dread of asking ; especially as she had an entire conviction that her request would not be granted. She felt like a newly-caught bird in a cage ; and, whilst her body was fixed to the nur-

sery-stool, her spirit was flying through the window and on the road to the poor-house. This agony had endured about half an hour, when Elizabeth came to the door to say, that if the children were asleep, Mrs. Janet was wanted below. So Mrs. Janet rose and left the room.

She had no sooner closed the door behind her, than Lilly flung down her stocking and rose from her seat. For an instant, she hesitated ; but time pressed. There was the nursery-clock pointing to the half hour past eight—at half-past nine the gates of the poor-house closed, after which, without interest, no visiter could be admitted. There was not a minute to lose, so she softly opened the door and listened ; nobody seemed near. Her own bonnet and shawl hung on a hook on the landing-place, that they might always be at hand when she had occasion to accompany the children to the garden. She took them down, and, without putting them on,

descended the stairs. An instinctive caution led her rather to carry them in her hand than wear them; though, had she met Mrs. Janet, which was what she feared, the mere appearance of them in her possession would have betrayed her. But fortune favoured her, and she met nobody, except the kitchen-maid, who was not entitled to interfere with her proceedings. Mr. Ross was in his office; Mrs. Janet was with Mrs. Ross, in her bed-room, discussing some nefarious designs against the liberty and freewill of the unsuspecting slumberers above; and the other servants, when they saw Lilly slip out at the back-door, had no reason to suppose that she was going without leave. So she effected her escape without opposition; and, once clear of the house, she made the best of her way, for the distance was considerable, and she trembled lest she might not arrive before the gates were shut, and the object of her expedition be defeated.

“I wish,” said Mrs. Ross, just as the subject of her remark was climbing over a wicket at the bottom of the garden, that happened to be locked—“I wish we could get Lilly to exert a little more energy with the children. She’s a steady, good girl as can be ; but she’s so dull !”

“I don’t quite understand Lilly, ma’am,” said Mrs. Janet. “Sometimes, I think she’s got something in her head. I’m sure, all to-day she hasn’t known whether she’s been standing on that or her heels.”

“But that’s not generally the case, surely,” returned Mrs. Ross. “She always appears collected enough. Perhaps she’s a little excited at receiving her wages.”

“I don’t know, ma’am ; I should be sorry to think she’d been taking anything, but, really, I don’t know what to make of her.”

“Where is she?” inquired Mrs. Ross.

“In the nursery, ma’am.”

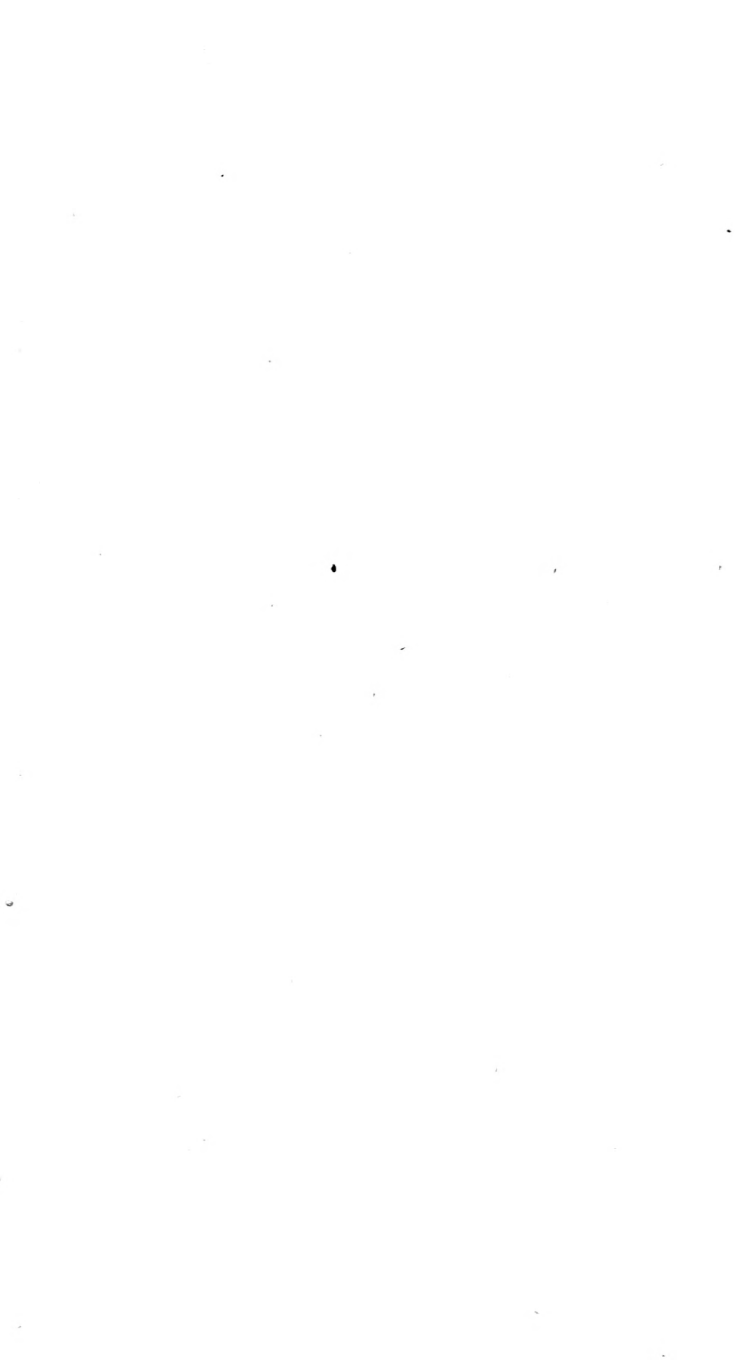
“I’ll go up and look at her,” said the

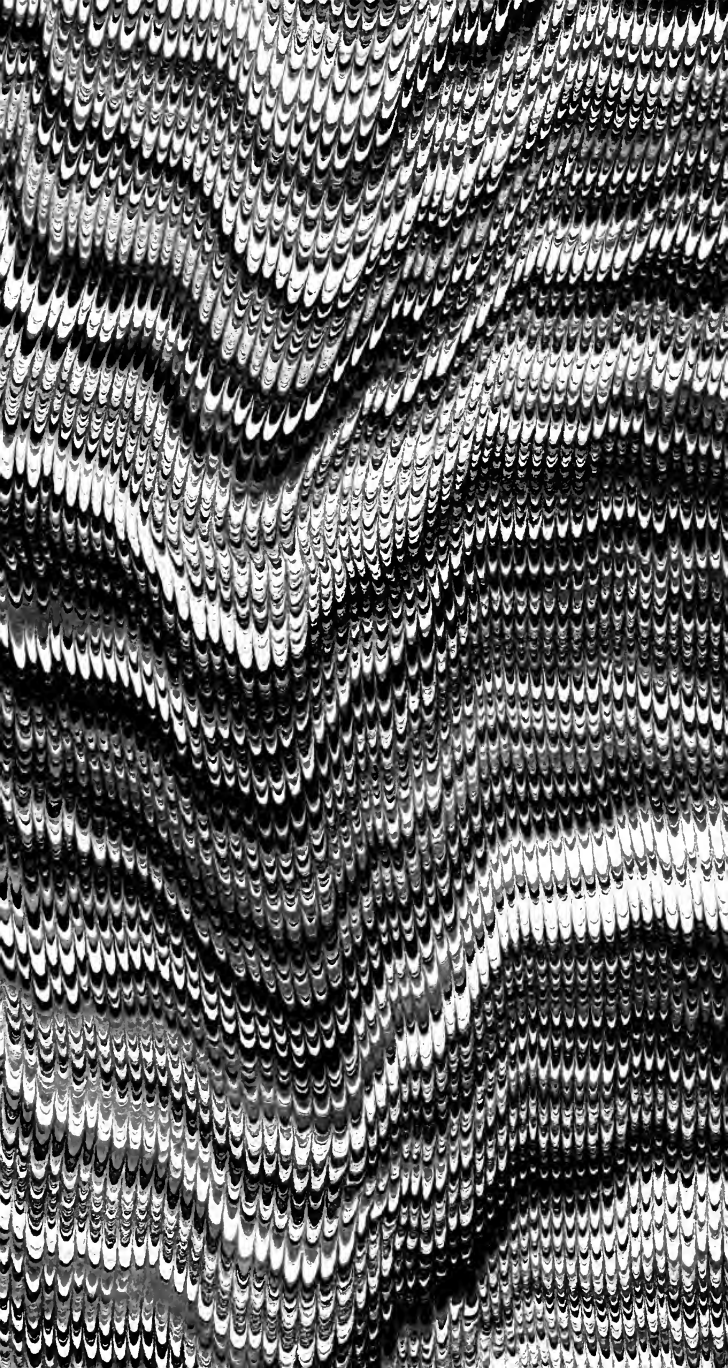
lady ; and, suiting the action to the word, she ascended the stairs with the nurse.

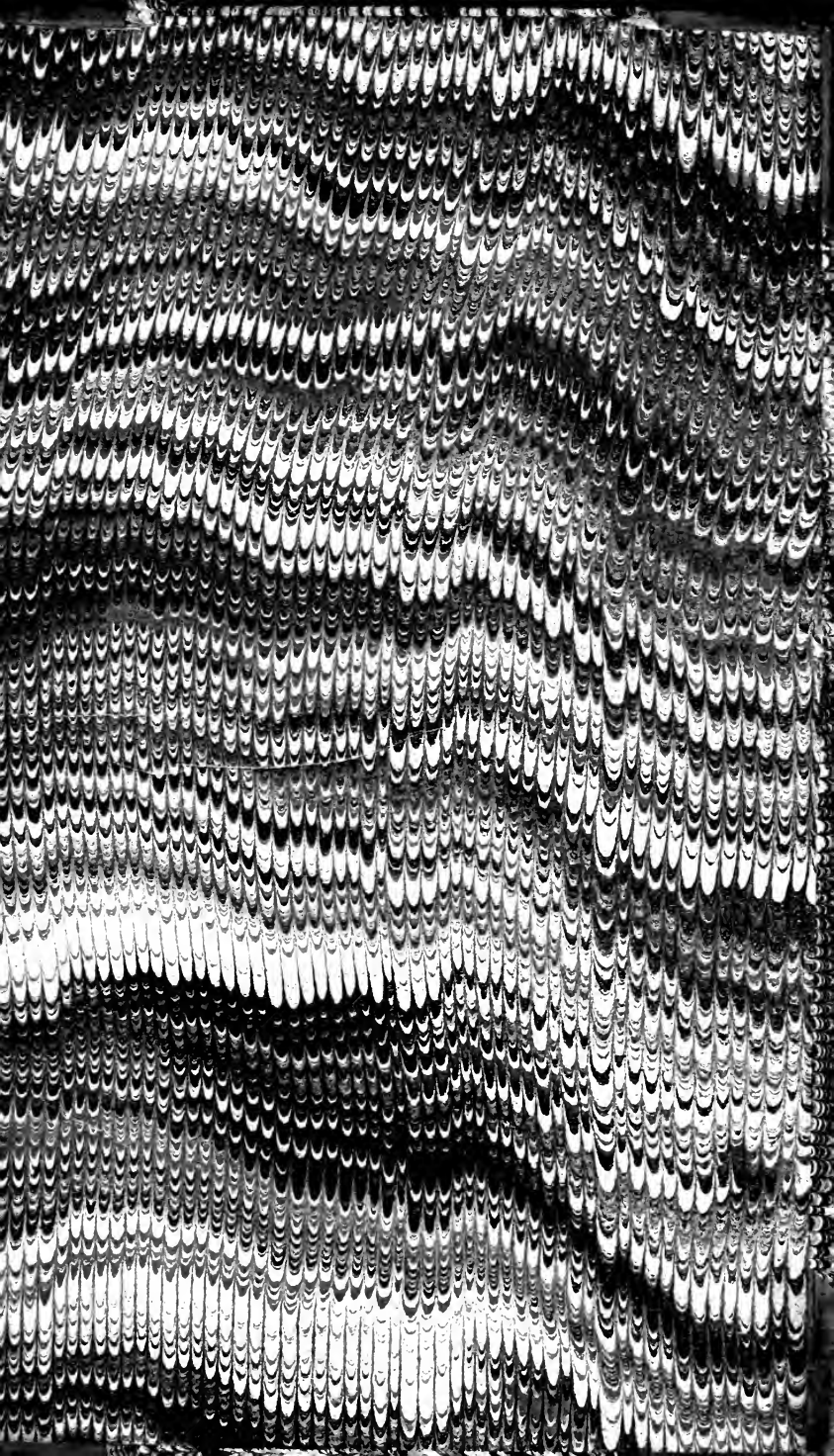
“Heavens and earth !” cried Mrs. Janet, who went first with the candle, as she rushed to the table, whilst Mrs. Ross cried loudly for help. They were but just in time. The stocking Lilly had been mending had caught the candle, as she hastily flung it down. In a minute more, the flame would have reached the work-basket, and the room would have been on fire !—perhaps the children burnt in their beds !

There was no question as to who was in fault ; but where was the culprit ? Gone out without leave—and nobody knew whither !

END OF VOL. I.







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